

Children's Comedies *and* Comic Recitations



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Children's Comedies and Comic Recitations

BY

HOBERT O. BOGGS

Author of

FUNNY PLAYS FOR HAPPY DAYS
COMIC PLAYS AND DIALOGUES



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CHILDREN'S COMEDIES

A LESSON FROM AN HUMBLE SOURCE

CHARACTERS

THOMAS JEFFERSON

TOM, *his grandson*

CÆSAR, *a black servant*

SCENE: *In front of Monticello*

COSTUMES

Colonial for greater effect. Regular if more convenient.

Discovered: THOMAS JEFFERSON and TOM, seated in porch chairs. JEFFERSON appears as quite an old man.

TOM. Grandfather Jefferson, you promised me that you would tell me something this morning with a lesson to it.

JEFFERSON. So I did, so I did. Now let's see what I can tell you that I have not already used to point some lesson.

TOM. Tell me something more about your own school days, Gran'ther. I love to hear that.

JEFFERSON. There might be very small chance of bringing out an object lesson from any of my own experiences, Tom. I prefer to put something before your attention this morning which will make a permanent and lasting impression upon your intellect.

CÆSAR is seen passing through behind them. He halts when he sees that the porch is occupied.

JEFFERSON. All right, Cæsar. Go right on across, if you had started across.

CÆSAR [*bowing very low*]. Good mawnin', Massa Jefferson an' Young Marster Tom.

JEFFERSON. Good morning to you, Cæsar. I wish you good health for the day.

CÆSAR [*bowing and scraping*]. Thankee, sah. Thankee.

Exit CÆSAR

TOM. Grandfather, I am surprised that you waste so many words in greeting and conversing with a nigger.

JEFFERSON. I am more surprised at you, my lad. I am surprised and ashamed that you did not speak to Cæsar.

TOM. I consider myself too good to speak to a nigger.

JEFFERSON. The mere act of speaking to some one you know cannot degrade you, no matter how lowly or humble the one to whom you speak. Politeness is nothing more than pure kindness of heart and gentility. That is why I am surprised and ashamed that my grandson will allow a poor slave to be more polite than he.

TOM. I had not thought of it in that light. You have given me a lesson which I expect to remember always. And I promise you, too, that you need never feel ashamed of me again for such a reason. I shall henceforth permit no one to be more polite to me than I am to them.

CURTAIN

ABE LINCOLN'S KINDNESS

CHARACTERS

ABE *as a lad of 12 years*
HIS FATHER

COSTUMES

Homespun (well worn khaki will suffice), brogans, coon-skin caps. The FATHER carries a long-barreled rifle in the crook of his arm.

SCENE: *Out-of-doors.*

Enter ABE, closely followed by his FATHER

FATHER [*catching ABE's shirt sleeve*]. Woa, Abe! Whar ye goin', boy? Be ye turned aroun'?

ABE. Nope, I'm goin' back down t' th' crick after Sniffles.

FATHER. Whar's Sniffles at?

ABE. On t'other bank.

FATHER. Whut's he doin' thar, Abe?

ABE. He's yelpin' an' snifflin' as he usually does when anything gits wrong uv 'im.

FATHER. Why, whut's wrong uv 'im now?

ABE. He's skeered uv th' ice an' 'fraid t' cross on it.

FATHER. Well, whut ye gonna be doin' 'bout it?

ABE. I gonna fetch 'im over.

FATHER. Jest let 'im be, son. If he's thet big uv a coward, he ain't wuth havin', nohow.

ABE. But Pap, I want Sniffles.

FATHER. Let 'im skin acrost on the' ice, then, or if it breaks with 'im, let 'im swim. He won't never learn no younger.

ABE. He won't never tackle it, Pap. He'll stay right thar an' starve.

FATHER. Let 'im be, then. We gotta be driftin' on. This ain't gittin' out uv Kaintuck inter Illinoy.

ABE. Go ahead an' start up th' oxen, then, Pap. I'll fetch Sniffles acrost an' ketch ye afore ye git fur.

FATHER. How ye gonna figger on gittin' him acrost, Abe, ef th' ice won't hold 'im an' he won't swim where th' oxen's broke through?

ABE. I reckon as how I c'n wade an' tote 'im, can't I?

FATHER. In that cold water? Why, boy, ye're crazy!

ABE. I'll pull off my brogans an' roll up my britches. It won't hurt me none. Didn't we both wade in ice water yesterday when th' wagon got stuck?

FATHER. But thet wuz nec'sary wadin'. This here ye're perposin' is plumb foolishness. That dog ain't wuth th' powder an' lead t' blow 'is brains out. I'd let 'im be where he is.

ABE. But Pap, he'd freeze t' death or starve, ef we left 'im, like that, an' he's jest a pup. I'm gonna fetch 'im over, Pap, ef ye don't keer.

FATHER. Oh, well, ef ye're dead sot on it, I reckon as how it won't be no skin offa my back fer ye t' tote 'im over, so go to it.

ABE. I'm ter'bly much obliged t' ye, Pap, fer givin' me yer lief. I'll be back in a few jerks uv a lam's tail.

Exit ABE in the direction in which he first started

FATHER. Lookit 'im now, rollin' up 'is jeans an' wadin' inter thet icy water, all fer a little no-count, two-fer-nothin' pup, t' keep it from starvin' or freezin'. I dunno which is th' softest uv thet boy, his heart or his head.

CURTAIN

FIVE PRIM LITTLE PATRIOTS

A Colonial Costume Play for Five Small Girls

CHARACTERS

DOLLY
MARTHA

SARAH
JANE

DOROTHY

SCENE: *A front porch or lawn. A small table, five chairs, a teapot and five cups and saucers will be required as properties.*

Discovered: The little girls seated about the table.

MARTHA [*sipping her tea*]. What topping fun to play we are grown up like this!

DOLLY. Oh yes, indeed. Mother always likes to have me play in this manner. She says it makes me practice the manners she teaches me and does me good. [*Sips tea.*]

DOROTHY. I am quite sure that it does all of us good, Dolly.

SARAH. If we drink too much of this tea it will not be good for our complexions, though. At least that is what Mother tells me.

DOLLY. Never fear about this tea injuring your complexion, Sarah. Since King George and his Parliament—

JANE [*interrupting*]. My, that is a frightfully big word!

SARAH [*chidingly*]. Why do you interrupt, Jane? That is such a rude thing to do!

DOROTHY. What of King George and his Parley—what do you call it, Dolly? Tell us about it.

DOLLY. Why, since King George and his Parliament placed the unjust tax on tea, we have had nothing boiled in our teapot but sassafras bark.

JANE. My, that's another big old word; but I know what it is. That is what we use for tea, too. Did I interrupt then, Sarah?

DOLLY. Not in the least, Jane. I don't mind at all when my guests wish to speak. Mother tells me that that is the secret of being a social success, to be ready at all times to listen to another.

MARTHA. We always have such delightful times at your parties, Dolly.

JANE [*sipping avidly*]. And this tea is so delicious. It tastes quite like the genuine kind.

MARTHA. It really does. Ours always seems to have a little touch of bitterness and drawiness, no matter how long it is boiled.

DOLLY. Of course all of you will understand that it was not inhospitable of me that I haven't passed the sugar. We really have none to pass.

DOROTHY. No one has any since the Redcoats blockaded Boston. That is, no one except perhaps the Tories. Mother says that some of them have gained the good graces of the British by giving valuable information about their own neighbors, and thus manage to get plenty of everything.

SARAH. I wish every bite that they get like that would turn to something bitter in their mouths. It would be bitter to me if I had to betray my countrymen to get it.

MARTHA. Well, when Brother Richard was home last month on his furlough—

JANE. What a funny word!

SARAH [*severely*]. Jane.

JANE. Oh, excuse me, I forgot.

MARTHA. Yes, Jane. When Brother Richard was here on his furlough, he said that the Tories in Philadelphia found their sugar turned to salt when General Washington retook the city.

JANE. They deserved it, too. My Cousin Charles wrote to us that he was almost captured once because of some Tory tricks.

DOROTHY. Was he, really?

JANE. Indeed so. He was being hotly pursued—whatever that is, by the British, and they cut down a large tree across his pathway, which his horse could not jump.

DOROTHY. Oh, how cowardly!

JANE. He saved himself only by quickly dismounting and plunging into a thicket of underbrush.

SARAH. That was mighty thoughtful of him.

DOLLY. One needs to be thoughtful now. Even we children should be thoughtful of all the things we may do for our country and its defenders.

JANE. So we should, indeed.

MARTHA. Mother ripped up all of her white dresses and petticoats to make bandages of them for our soldiers.

DOROTHY. My little crippled brother has given all of his leaden toys to be melted into bullets.

DOLLY. Oh, I think if General Washington had known about Edward's toys, he would not have allowed them to be taken.

SARAH. I am quite sure he would not. Poor Edward's toys will make such a few bullets, and they gave him so much pleasure.

DOROTHY. But he smiled as he kissed each one good bye, and sent it away saying, "Go an' till a Wedtoat and ventum back."

JANE. Everyone seems to be doing something for the sake of our country's freedom. Why, father told us of a minister who rushed out of his church to a near-by battle ground, with his arms full of psalm books, when the Americans had no more wadding for their guns.

MARTHA. That was a noble thing to do. Some of our ministers are among the foremost fighters, too.

DOLLY. Seems to me, then, that we, too, could think of something to do for the cause, though it be only a little.

SARAH. Brother Will is scarcely sixteen; but he has been carrying his gun side by side with Father more than three months. Robert is only fourteen and he begs Mother every day to let him go, too.

DOROTHY. Mother says that the white hair of youth and the white hair of age can only be distinguished in the lines, by the bowed heads that carry the latter.

DOLLY. Can no one think of anything for *us* to do?

All assume a thoughtful attitude. No one makes a suggestion.

DOLLY. I know what we can do, if nothing more. We can sing our little song.

OTHERS [*in unison*]. Let's do.

All stand in their places and sing to tune of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

WE ARE ONLY LITTLE CHILDREN

We are only little children, but we're patriots through and through!

So we try each day to think of all the things that we can do

To help our loyal soldiers who have fought for us and you
To free us from a king.

Chorus:

We are only little children, we are only little children,
We are only little children; but patriots through and through.

It may be but little that we younger ones can start
In the way of something helpful, that we all may do
our part;

But we're ready and we're willing from the bottom of
each heart

To do our little bit.

At the close of the singing DOLLY speaks to others again.

DOLLY. Now, take up your cups again. As hostess, I suggest we drink what is left of our sassafras tea in a toast.

JANE [*regarding her cup*]. I have but very little left, myself.

SARAH. Propose the toast, then, Dolly.

DOROTHY. We shall all join you in drinking it.

MARTHA. Propose two toasts and ask your mother for some more tea, to drink the second.

DOLLY [*lifting her cup*]. Here is to the health of our soldiers and their success in battle!

All lift their cups and drink at the same time.

CURTAIN

THE QUIZ

CHARACTERS

MRS. CROSSLYN, *the Inquisitor.*

BUD } *Both ignorant and innocent.*
SARAH }

DUNCAN, *aged four, wiser than his years.*

SCENE: *The Living-room of the CROSSLYN Home.*

Discovered: The children at play. Enter MRS. CROSSLYN.

MRS. CROSSLYN. Now listen to me, children. I want to know something.

BUD. 'Smatter, Ma? Y' stuck on a cross-word puzzle?

SARAH [*guiltily*]. Mother, I used only a little tiny bit of your powder and I put it right back where I found it.

MRS. CROSSLYN. Sarah, I have told you repeatedly to use your own powder, but—

SARAH. I can't use mine, when I have none, can I?

MRS. CROSSLYN. For a girl no older or larger than you, Sarah, I fail to see why you should use cosmetics.

BUD. That's what I say, Ma. I think it's th' most senseless Brigham-Tory thing I ever saw, for little strips like her t' use cow's medics a-tall.

DUNCAN. Muvver, don't 'ooks t' me like girleses'd want t' use cow med'cine.

SARAH. They don't. Nobody but a half-baked kid like Bud would call toilet preparations any such name.

MRS. CROSSLYN. The word is cosmetics, Buddy.

BUD. Well, that's almost what I said. Anyhow, little girls look better without than with th' stuff.

SARAH. Don't pay any attention to him, Mother; he's mashed on that silly looking Nora Pruett, who won't use any powder or paint, so he thinks that it's cute to make insinuations about folks who do.

BUD. I don't make incinerations about nobody. I say what I think in plain words 'cause if th's anybody I hate it's a wolf in sheep's clothing.

DUNCAN. Vat's me, too, Bud. I'm like you an' Pa. I ain't dot no use fer a wolf in sheep's britches, neiver.

MRS. CROSSLYN. Well, we are getting aside from what I had started to say. I didn't begin to ask about my powder. Didn't even know that it had been molested.

BUD [*aside*]. My gosh! I bet she's missed them liver pills I used in my air rifle for B B's.

SARAH. Then you are not angry with me about the powder?

MRS. CROSSLYN. I think it would be better for you to ask me hereafter, when you wish to use my belongings.

SARAH. Thank you, Mother. I shall not bother your toilet table again without asking.

DUNCAN. Muvver, she don't need de *table*; but I bets y' she dits in your powder adain if hers dives out.

BUD. Sis got in good with Ma by pleadin' guilty in advance; but I ain't gonna own up t' nothin'. My name is Clams when it comes t' tellin' on m'self.

MRS. CROSSLYN. Now, what I want to know, is this [*raises forefinger significantly*]—

DUNCAN. Why, Muvver, vat's your finger.

MRS. CROSSLYN. Keep still, Duncan.

DUNCAN. I never even budged, Muvver.

MRS. CROSSLYN. I mean, shut your mouth and keep it shut.

BUD. Aw, Ma, he's got adenoids. He can't.

MRS. CROSSLYN. That's enough foolishness, now. While I was gone over to Mrs. Baker's, *something* happened. I want to find out all about it.

SARAH. Why don't you go back over to Mrs. Baker's, then, Mother? She can usually tell you most anything that has happened near her.

BUD. And she's a reg'lar six-tube set fer pickin' up items at long range, too.

MRS. CROSSLYN. This happening took place *in this house* while I was out for the few minutes that I was gone.

BUD [*aside*]. That lets me out, then. It wuz yesterday mornin' that I went down to th' Baptis' Convention an' used them C C's fer B B's on them bald-headed D D's.

SARAH [*virtuously*]. I haven't been outside this room since you left, Mother.

BUD [*brazenly*]. What's happened, Ma? Don't keep us in six-pence so long.

MRS. CROSSLYN. While I was out, some one went into the pantry and picked off all the icing from the cake I had prepared for the meeting of the Ladies' Aid.

DUNCAN. Muvver, what would a Lady Aig need wiv a cake?

MRS. CROSSLYN [*looking at SARAH and BUD*]. Now, which of you did such a naughty thing?

SARAH. Mother, I didn't. Upon my honor, I didn't.

BUD. Me neither, Ma. I don't like icicles on cake nor any fluffy stuff on pie. I take mine straight without any doodads or thingum-bobs to it.

MRS. CROSSLYN. Now, children, don't tell me a falsehood. No one has been here while I was away, has there?

SARAH. The ice man came in just after you left.

BUD. I bet he's th' bird that got it. That's about it, Ma. Th' ice man took th' ice pick an' picked off th' icing an' called it ice cream.

MRS. CROSSLYN. Nonsense! No grown man would do anything like that.

DUNCAN. Vat's what you said vat time ve baf-tub was full of little fishes, too. But Pop vas ve one vat had 'em for fish-bait, wasn't he?

MRS. CROSSLYN. But I don't feel like the ice man did this. It is hardly plausible.

SARAH. Why, Mother, you don't mean to hold up for the ice man in order to accuse your own children, do you?

MRS. CROSSLYN. I believe in "rendering unto Cæsar, that which is Cæsar's."

BUD. Yeah, but Ma, Cæsar's been dead too long to lay this on him.

MRS. CROSSLYN. I merely used the name of Cæsar as a figure of speech. I meant that I intended to mete out justice.

SARAH. Why, I thought you said it was the cake that had been bothered.

BUD. What's happened to th' meat, Ma?

MRS. CROSSLYN. The word "mete" that I used means to measure or dispense. In other words I meant to say that I was in favor of weighing out justice according to evidence and reason.

DUNCAN. Well, Muvver, don't it look as reas'nable vat a ice man would like cake as well as a little boy?

MRS. CROSSLYN. It hardly looks as reasonable that he would be plundering the pantry of this house as that Bud or Sarah would, though.

SARAH. Why accuse only Bud and me? Duncan has had the same chance to have taken the cake dressing as we.

MRS. CROSSLYN. Oh no, I don't think Duncan got it.

BUD. He ain't a bit too good to do anything like that. An' he was gone out of the room where we were for quite a while. I bet he got it.

MRS. CROSSLYN. I tell you, I don't think so. Duncan is too little.

SARAH. Bud didn't get it *while you were gone*, if that's when it was taken, and I *know* I didn't get it.

BUD. Sis an' I looked at a magazine all th' time you were gone over to Baker's.

SARAH. Duncan must be the guilty one.

MRS. CROSSLYN. Now see here, Sarah, I won't have you accusing your little brother any longer. It is bad enough that you and Bud are both telling me a falsehood, without making a false accusation against an innocent party.

BUD. Well, now, Ma, I'm not tellin' no falsehood. I never got near that old cake an' while I'm not exactly accusing Duncan, I believe he did, if anyone in this house did.

MRS. CROSSLYN. Why, that is ridiculous. Duncan is too little. The cake was on the top shelf of the pantry. That would be about three feet higher than Duncan's head. No, I tell you again that I don't think Duncan got it.

DUNCAN. Muvver, if I did dot it, I dot up on a chair an' dot it.

CURTAIN

HERO WORSHIPERS

CHARACTERS

AL, *an admirer of Washington*

JOE, *an admirer of Lincoln*

HUB, *an admirer of Lindbergh*

SCENE: *The reading room of a Public Library.*

Discovered: The three boys seated about a table with open books before them.

AL. Gosh, but Washington was a great man!

JOE. Which one, Al? Booker T.?

AL. No, I mean George Washington. Anybody knows that when you say *Washington*, George Washington is the one referred to.

JOE. Yes, but you may just think so. Why, half of the niggers in this country firmly believe that George and Booker T. were half-brothers.

HUB. Who was Booker T. Washington, anyway?

AL. Oh, he was just a nigger, that's all.

JOE. Nigger or not, he ate breakfast with President Roosevelt one time, and he wrote a book called "Up From Slavery."

AL. Why, that's nothing to brag about, that I can see. Anybody is liable to get up to breakfast some morning with their eyes half open and fail to notice whom they sit down to eat with.

HUB. Well, for my part, I don't set much store on either one of your Washingtons. First and foremost, I'm no nigger lover, so I don't admire Booker T., even if he had slept with the Governor of Virginia.

AL. You'll have to admit, though, that George Washington was a great man.

HUB. Well, yes, he was great all right, I suppose; but I don't rate him so high on account of one thing.

JOE. What is that, Hub?

HUB. Why, the way he was so soft and easy to plead guilty to that cherry tree offense. If he had possessed any initiative or resourcefulness, he could easily have escaped all responsibility in that matter.

JOE. Why, I don't see how. He chopped it down. How could he avoid saying so, without compromising his self-respect?

HUB [*pityingly*]. You are pretty soft, too, Joe.

AL. Well, why don't you tell us how he could have avoided the consequences of his act?

HUB. I will. He could have entered the plea that he was suffering from a case of Si Cotter's new roses, induced by an inferiority complex of hatchet-itis.

AL. Oh, that's all bunk.

HUB. I don't care if it is. It's saved lots of people from *occupying a bunk*.

JOE. You always try to find something funny in everything that is mentioned.

AL. You ought to be a King's Jester.

HUB. Well, I wouldn't mind being one, only kings are getting so scarce nowadays, that I might need to hire out to a playing-card factory in order to keep in employment.

AL. You wouldn't mind being a jester or fool, then?

HUB. Why, no, I wouldn't mind. I'd like it. Some of the "fools" we read about were smarter than the kings they amused. It was a court fool who originated the saying that, "A poor excuse is worse than none."

JOE. The saying hardly seems to be borne out by actual application to life.

HUB. That is exactly the protest which was made by the feeble-minded monarch to whom the maxim was originally stated.

AL. Of course, though, your smart fool had some witty remark or retort, to defend his words and put the king to shame.

HUB. The king was rather embarrassed by his own bungling.

JOE. Naturally, you would try to describe your hero, The Fool, to the best advantage.

HUB. I only tell what is recorded in history.

AL. Go on, then, and tell us how he got ahead of the king. We are listening.

HUB. Why, the king expressed a doubt that "a poor excuse was worse than none," just as you did, and demanded that the jester give him an immediate illustration to prove his statement.

JOE. Which the jester did, of course.

HUB. Yes, he did. He at once fondly embraced the king and kissed him on the mouth.

AL. I can't see where that would illustrate the adage about a poor excuse being worse than none.

HUB. Neither did the king at first blush. He was very angry that his clown should take such a liberty, and demanded to know what he meant by thus making love to him.

JOE. And what excuse did the jester make?

HUB. He said, "Pardon me, Sire, I thought it was the Queen."

JOE. Oh, I see now, "A poor excuse."

AL. And "Worse than none."

HUB. He proved his contention all right, didn't he?

AL. Sure, but what of it, if he did. There is nothing great or beneficial to the following generations about that.

HUB. I didn't represent him as a benefactor of humanity, did I? I do admire his wit and cleverness, though.

AL. I prefer to give my admiration to some one who actually *did* something.

JOE. I believe I do, too, Al.

AL. Now I really think that Washington is worth being patterned after and used as a model.

HUB. I don't hold any grudge against Washington; but it's no crime against his memory to admire some one else.

AL. In a way it is. He was The Father of our Country, and I think it is his just due to receive the admiration and respect of every American above any other person in history.

HUB. You don't mean to say that you think Washington should be honored and worshiped to the exclusion of every other great figure, do you?

AL. Well, just about. To my notion he was the greatest man that ever was, in this country or any other.

JOE. That covers lots of territory, Al.

AL. I know it does, Joe, and so does Washington's greatness, too. Why, he threw a silver dollar plumb across the Rappahannock River and he had to have his gloves made to order to get any large enough for his hands.

JOE. Well, Abraham Lincoln didn't wear any gloves. If that spells anything, I guess he was the greatest. *His* hands were so great it was too expensive to try to keep them covered.

AL. Washington was a soldier and a statesman, too. He fought to gain freedom for the thirteen colonies; then he helped to make a nation of them as the first president.

JOE. I didn't mean to belittle the deeds of Washington; but I do think Lincoln labored under more difficulties.

HUB. Whoop it up, boys! Whoop it up! The debate is now on.

AL. What do you mean by "more difficulties"? Didn't Washington make a republic where there was nothing?

JOE. He had all kinds of able and worthy assistance in the task, though. There were Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Adams, Paine and many others to help him. In fact, the men I named were more largely responsible for our form of government than the First President.

AL. Why do you say that?

JOE. They wrote the Constitution, which prescribed everything.

AL. Even so, then, where does Lincoln's greatness come in? He not only had the Constitution to follow; but more than a half score of amendments to it as well.

JOE. Yes and he also had the tremendous task of abolishing slavery and preserving the Union at one and the same time; and that with even his own cabinet members in opposition to his plans and seeking to divert his ideas at every turn.

HUB. That is right, Al. Secretary Seward was a violent opponent of practically every plan or proposal put forth by the man who appointed him.

AL. I don't care what you say. Both of you can turn on me if you like; but I still say Washington was the greatest man that ever was.

JOE. I choose Lincoln for that distinction.

HUB. I haven't turned on you especially, Al. You don't need to feel badly toward me. Go ahead and worship your hero. I have no objections.

AL. I will. I'd rather be Washington than anyone I ever heard of or read about.

HUB. Which Washington do you mean, George or Booker T.?

AL [*indignantly*]. I mean George Washington, the one we have been discussing. I just wish I could be George Washington.

JOE. I'd rather be Lincoln, for my part.

HUB. You fellows are foolish. I'd rather be Lindbergh than a dozen Washingtons and Lincolns put together. Not altogether on account of his greatness, either.

AL. Well why, then, if not for his greatness?

HUB. He's still living, while your heroes are dead.

CURTAIN

WILLIE WENT AND GOT LOST

CHARACTERS

WILLIE, *who lost himself in slumber*

MRS. O'DAY, *his Ma*

MRS. BRENN, *a neighbor*

PATRICK SHAY, *an efficient policeman*

MIKE O'DAY, *the unperturbed father*

SCENE: *The O'Day living-room. Among other furniture there is required a table at the Front Center, draped with a cloth which hangs almost to the floor on all sides.*

Discovered: MRS. O'DAY bustling about the room with a dust cloth, making a swipe here and there, and occasionally rearranging some article. Under the table, with his head protruding so that he is in plain view of the audience at all times, WILLIE sleeps peacefully.

MRS. O'DAY. Well, and now that the old man's gone off to his work and all the childers gone to school, I set myself down and work a bit more on the pillow cases I started for Sister Mary's oldest girl's hope chest.

She sits and works at some needlecraft.

MRS. O'DAY [*continuing*]. If something don't happen to her in the way of matter-moany, that box she's got had better be called a hopeless chest. And I've dibbled and dabbled on this till it's almost a hopeless mess, too. I started out to make a table runner and when the lemonade got spilled on one end, I just turned it back under and started in to make a pillow case out of it. This splotched up place can be kept on the bottom all the time.

Enter MRS. BRENN, without knocking.

MRS. BRENN. I always just come on in without going to any trouble about knockin'. It never did seem like it was nec'sary between close friends like us.

MRS. O'DAY. Why, of course not. Sit right down and make out like you was at home. I don't believe in standin' on no social inventions either.

MRS. BRENN. Now, that's me predentically. I tell you, Missis O'Day, folks in our station in life can't afford to. It's too much trouble and consumes too much valuable time for us wives of workin' men to stand on ceremony.

MRS. O'DAY. That's what I tell Mike when he fusses 'cause I don't put on more frills and fancies when his kinfolks comes. Us women that's got to put up with what we do and make out on the likes of what we have, can't begin to complete with the idle rich poodle-packers that's pictured in the Sunday Supply-mints.

MRS. BRENN. You said a mouthful again. I tell you, my husband's income ain't what it used to be an' I'm havin' t' conform myself to it. It ain't no picnic, neither.

MRS. O'DAY. Well, now that you've mentioned it, I'll have to admit that Mike don't come in as early as he used to. Sometimes he lays out till midnight and after.

MRS. BRENN. That's scan'lous; but I was makin' ref'rence to th' income o' my husband's wages. It's that what makes the shoe pinch on both feet and me barefooted in the bargain.

MRS. O'DAY. Oh, sure and yes, if it's that what ye mean. Well, now, I c'n easily say a word or two there, too. What does my breadwinner do last pay day but do th' daily dozen on his pay envelope on account av mussin' up two or three shirts he wuz sewin' on in th' fac'try.

MRS. BRENN. Whut d'ye mean by th' daily dozen ref'rence? What's that got t' do with a pay envelope?

MRS. O'DAY. Oh, it jist means that it wuz *reduced*, that's all, an' a lot it is, at that.

MRS. BRENN. Oh, an' then y' say they reduced his pay?

MRS. O'DAY. Yes, he wuz sewin' away an' lookin' away, too, both together an' at once, so he says, when up steps th' superintendent av th' works.

MRS. BRENN. Och, an' he did, did 'e?

MRS. O'DAY. Yes, an' 'e says t' Mike, says 'e, "O'Day, how does it happen that I come up behind you and find you lookin' out th' windy?"

MRS. BRENN. I guess Mike had no answer ready fer that.

MRS. O'DAY. Sure he did. He comes back right quick at 'im.

MRS. BRENN. What'd Mike say, then?

MRS. O'DAY. He says, "Sure, Sor, an' I reckon it's them rubber heels ye're wearin' as accounts fer it."

MRS. BRENN. A good ans'er.

MRS. O'DAY. But a poor reply. Th' Super then tells Mike as how he's runnin' his stitches as crooked as a dog's leg.

MRS. BRENN. And what says Mike t' that?

MRS. O'DAY. Mike says, "Sew it seams," an' fer that he got 'is pay reduced.

MRS. BRENN. How terrible! Some people ain't got no sense av humor in their system at all.

MRS. O'DAY. Well, I don't know but that th' superintendent had th' last laugh after all an' his laugh was a cuttin' one at that.

MRS. BRENN. I guess so. It cut an' was cuttin' in th' sense that it cut off dollars an' cents.

MRS. O'DAY. An' also, I've scarcely laughed *since*, either. An' th' childers have missed th' *scents* av their customary cream an' candy on th' wake av it.

MRS. BRENN. An' it's sorely they've missed it, too, if they're one bit like mine.

MRS. O'DAY [*springing up*]. Och, an' I hadn't missed my Willie, till ye up an' spoke as ye did. O Willie!

MRS. BRENN. An' where is yer Willie?

MRS. O'DAY [*frantically*]. That jist what I don't know but want t' find out m'self. O Willie! Willie, where are you?

MRS. BRENN. Now Missis O'Day, do ca'm yerself. Sure an' th' lad ain't far.

MRS. O'DAY [*turning round and round, waving her arms*]. Och, an' 'e might be. He does so love t' play. Willie! O Willie! Are ye lost? Ans'er me quick, yis or no!

MRS. BRENN. I tell ye, Missis O'Day, if he's lost it ain't likely ye'll ever find 'im alive. There's so many things can happen to a child on th' streets now.

MRS. O'DAY. O Willie! Willie! Ans'er yer Ma! Och, an' let's go look fer 'im, Missis Brenn.

MRS. BRENN. Sure, an' let's do. Let's call at th' accident ward av th' nearest hospital first. He's prob'ly been run over by somethin' by now.

They both go out at Left. The women are scarcely out when PATRICK SHAY and MIKE O'DAY enter at the Right.

PATRICK. Sure an' I'm glad ye're not workin' to-day, Mike.

MIKE. Well, it's glad I am, Patrick, an' sorry, too. I'm glad t' miss th' duty but sorry t' lose th' revenue.

PATRICK. An' how does it happen ye're off t'day?

MIKE. Well, I went down t' th' mill an' milled aroun' waitin' my turn t' turn in my check number an' git a new pack av ampytated an' perforated pins, an' th' foreman announces that we won't work t'day.

PATRICK. What is ampytated an' perforated pins?

MIKE. Why, that's needles. They ain't nothin' but pins with th' heads cut off an' holes punched in 'em.

PATRICK. I hadn't thought of that. Not so bad fer a nickname either.

MIKE. Oh, I'm quite a hand at givin' things nicknames.

PATRICK. That reminds me av a good one a feller pulls on me last week.

MIKE. An' what'd 'e pull, Pat? A pocket cannon?

PATRICK. Oh no. He pulled a wise crack at me that left me without an ans'er, fer once.

MIKE. I can't imagine that. Tell me about it at once.

PATRICK. Well, this feller was in a early copy av one av Pharaoh's chariots—

MIKE. I bet I know th' guy.

PATRICK. An' he was tryin' t' cross t' th' south when I had signaled that traffic was open to th' east.

MIKE. *Tryin'* t' cross? Whyn't ye stop 'im?

PATRICK. I did. That's where he put in 'is wise crack.

MIKE. What'd 'e say?

PATRICK. Oh, I had th' first say. I bawled 'im out an' called 'im up good an' proper at first. He just set meek an' took what I poured on 'im an' where it'd run on 'im. Finally I wound up by callin' 'im several different varieties av idjiot an' asked 'im if he didn't see my han'.

MIKE. Asked 'im if he could see that mitt av yours an' it with yaller gloves on! He couldn't miss seein' that.

PATRICK. That's what I know, but when I says, "Didn't ye see my han'," he pops back, "No, sir, I thought that was a bunch of bananas you was wavin' fer me t' come after."

Reënter MRS. O'DAY and MRS. BRENN excitedly.

MRS. O'DAY. Och, an' here's Michael. O Michael, Michael! Willie's lost!

MIKE. Quiet now, Molly, maybe he's not *lost*. He's probably only *misplaced* himself somewhere.

MRS. BRENN. Stand there, Patrick Shay! Ye're a fine policeman! Let people's offspring get lost right on yer beat an' not do a thing about it but fly yer mouth open like a crocodile eatin' alligator pears.

PATRICK. Sure, an' I'll find th' bye, Missis Brenn. Be calm, Missis O'Day, I think I have a clue right now. (*Looks at Willie's foot protruding from beneath the table.*)

MIKE. Patrick's th' one'll find 'im if he c'n be found.

PATRICK [*dragging Willie out*]. Come out, young man, an' be rescued from a horrible fate by Missis Brenn, yer mother's worried about ye.

CURTAIN

THE RIGHT OF BOYHOOD

A Colonial Costume Play

CHARACTERS •

CAPTAIN STEARNE, *a British officer*

CORPORAL JUSTE, *his orderly*

JOSIAH

FRANCIS

HARRY

CARROLL

MARION

} *Colonial lads*

SCENE: CAPTAIN STEARNE'S room. A cot, a table and two chairs comprise the furniture. A large map of Massachusetts is on the wall.

Discovered: CAPTAIN STEARNE seated at table writing.

Enter CORPORAL JUSTE.

CORPORAL JUSTE [*saluting*]. Sir, there is a delegation outside to see you.

CAPTAIN STEARNE [*sourly*]. What kind of a delegation, Corporal Juste?

CORPORAL JUSTE. They are Americans, of course, sir.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. I might have known that. But who is in the delegation? Hancock and Adams, I hope. If those arch leaders of rebel ideas are here, I shall imprison them before the sun sets again.

CORPORAL JUSTE. No men are present, sir. These are only boys.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Boys! I have no time to waste on the children of rebels and traitors to their king. Their parents should have taught them more respect for their elders and for those in authority, than to disturb me.

CORPORAL JUSTE. They say, sir, that if you will but hear them a moment, they will remain perfectly quiet and orderly.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Hear them? That is all that I have done since I came to Boston. I have heard the mouthings and growlings of these dissatisfied renegades until I will hear no more. Now even the boys are trotting to me with some sort of petition or plea. I tell you, Corporal, there is no pleasing these Colonial dogs. Tell them to move away at once, before I have them imprisoned with some of their forebears.

CORPORAL JUSTE [*pleadingly*]. But, sir, I think if you will but hear these lads, you will say that there is some justice in what they say. They ask some rights.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Rights? They have no rights! By their undutifulness to their king, they have forfeited all claim to any of the rights of an Englishman. They call themselves Americans. Well, let them get the rights of an American, if they know how. Do as I say and drive them away at once, Corporal.

CORPORAL JUSTE *starts out, but halts at the door and turns about again in imploring attitude.*

CORPORAL JUSTE. Sir, you may court-martial me, if you like; but I will say what I have to tell you, if it costs me my neck.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Corporal Juste! I gave you a command. Are you a madman, to act thus?

CORPORAL JUSTE. Perhaps I am. But, even so, I am also a father, and not as a soldier to his officer, but as one father to another, I ask you, I implore you to hear these children in their plea.

CAPTAIN STEARNE [*touched*]. What is that you say, Juste?

CORPORAL JUSTE. I say, sir, that both of *us* have boys who wait for our return, far across the waves, in England. We both have sons whom we may never see again, and who may, some day, be asking others to grant them some small request. And sir, I say, do as you like with me; but for the sake of our two sons across the sea, hear what these lads of America have to say.

Much moved, CAPTAIN STEARNE goes to CORPORAL JUSTE and puts his arm familiarly across the latter's shoulders.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Bring them in, Edward, and fear not for yourself.

CORPORAL JUSTE *presses CAPTAIN STEARNE's hand for a moment, then turns to go. At the door he salutes.*

CORPORAL JUSTE. Thank you, sir. I hope we'll neither of us be sorry for this, and I'm 'most sure that we won't.

Exit CORPORAL JUSTE.

CAPTAIN STEARNE [*reflecting*]. I may regret this sorely when I have had time for my sentiment to cool a bit. Corporal Juste mentioned the word grievance. When these rebels have a grievance, be it real or fancied, they are the most persistent people on earth. I know the elders, and I am told that the very children have been nursed and nurtured upon discontent, until even they are masters of rhetoric and eloquence when under the impression that they have a grievance. [*Goes back to his table and seats himself.*]

[*Pause.*]

CAPTAIN STEARNE. But I shall hear them, as Corporal Juste begged me to do, in the name of his son and mine. Corporal Juste is rather too tender-hearted to be a good soldier, I fear. They may be saying the same of Captain Stearne next. I have smothered all of my nobler feelings since I have been in Boston, thinking I could better please my superiors in that manner. But I cannot always hide my heart.

Reënter CORPORAL JUSTE, followed by the boys.

CORPORAL JUSTE. Here they are, sir, and may God make you think of your own son as you hear them.

The boys stand before the table in manful attitudes, but with hats respectfully removed.

CAPTAIN STEARNE [*resuming his gruffness*]. You may go now, Corporal. I fear that you are a bad influence upon me as a soldier.

Exit CORPORAL JUSTE.

JOSIAH. We came here in a group, sir, to lay our grievances before you.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. And a self-willed and saucy looking group you are, too, I must say.

CAPTAIN STEARNE *tries to intimidate the boys by his severity of manner and speech.*

FRANCIS. No, sir, pardon me, but we are neither. At least we do not mean to be.

HARRY. We are all too well aware of the fact that you not only possess an advantage over us, but even over our sires, for anything like that.

CARROLL. We come here to present our grievance in the most respectful manner we know how to assume.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Ah yes, your *grievance*. Let's hear your grievance, if you have any. Don't forget, though, that you are now before that far-famed man-eater, Captain Stearne of His Majesty's troops.

MARION. With all the respect which we can command and control, we shall present our petition to the *man*, disregarding his uniform, which to us is so hateful as a symbol of our oppression.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. What! You young whelp, you disrespect my uniform?

MARION [*fearlessly*]. Sir, did I not just tell you that so far from disrespecting it, we disregard it entirely?

HARRY. We have schooled ourselves to endure many things in silence, sir, that we do not like.

FRANCIS. If we can endure the sight of something hateful to us without reviling it, you can surely endure hearing a few words from us.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. I can. No mere lads can put me to shame. Speak on, young rebels. I shall hear you through.

CARROLL. We call ourselves patriots; but since we did not come here to give insult, we shall not allow ourselves to take one.

JOSIAH. Nothing that you may say can inflame us to forget the purpose of our visit and mar our chances of success by an angry retort.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Well, state your troubles and have done with it. I cannot waste all the day with you.

HARRY. We have come to tell you of the overbearing and unnecessary harshness of your soldiers.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. My soldiers are usually under orders in their every act. What have they done now?

FRANCIS. Tell him, Marion. You can express yourself better than we.

MARION. Sir, we have come to tell you that your soldiers have conducted themselves as cowards and bullies, and whether they acted under orders or not, we consider it mere wantonness that our playgrounds have been disfigured, our pastimes interrupted, and our snow forts and houses trampled underfoot.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Such another long-winded little orator! My lad, you must surely be the son of Patrick Henry.

JOSIAH. We have heard of Patrick Henry of Virginia. What has that to do with the destruction of our forts?

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Ah, you have been building forts, then. What was your object in that?

JOSIAH. We played war, sir. We made snow men, whom we painted red with berry juice and knocked to pieces with snowballs, calling them Redcoats.

CARROLL. We also had sticks for bayonets, and when we made a charge, we gave the Indian war whoop.

FRANCIS. We did all these things in preparation and practice for the time when we may be old enough to become real soldiers and fight for the rights of our country.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Ah yes, you young hellions are yet too young to feel all the force of the retribution that is surely coming to these impudent and impertinent colonies.

HARRY. We are not too young to feel the humiliation and injustice of being needlessly routed from our accustomed playgrounds by your soldiers, though.

MARION. And we are not too young to tell you of our wrongs and demand the restitution of our rights.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Your rights? Have you any rights? What are your rights that you and your seniors keep prattling about so much of late?

FRANCIS. Your king and his soldiers seem to feel that a right does not exist for anyone if it interferes or conflicts in the slightest with any trivial wish or desire of theirs. But we are here to assert our right to play upon the Boston Common rather than have your men use it as a drill ground.

HARRY. There are plenty of places where they might drill without usurping the corner which we have used as a playground since our infancy. We were there first with our playing, so it is nothing but tyranny to take it from us.

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Your playing, indeed! What right have you to play, anyway? You young followers of the freethinkers, can you cite me anything in the Bill of Rights or the Magna Charta that gives you the right to play?

CAPTAIN STEARNE *indicates MARION with a triumphant air.*

CAPTAIN STEARNE. Now tell me, young spokesman, what right have you to play, and I shall perhaps give your plea more consideration.

MARION. Sir, we have an eminent right to play. Our right to play is one which goes back of all Constitutions and Charters, back of all Bills of Rights and Magna Chartas. The right of boys to play is one that precedes and antedates all the instruments and documents ever conceived in the mind of man or stricken off by his hand. Sir, the right to play is God-given. It was included in the very beginning in the mighty plan of creation. Our Maker so conceived us and so constructed us that we not only might have a desire to play; but that we *should play*.

He included it in the nature of all the young of His creation that they should seek an outlet for the ever bubbling surplus of their energy and spirit. He also provided a place for them to find this outlet when he carpeted the ground with flower-embroidered grass and shaded it with bending boughs of verdant beauty and branches laden with fruit. God created us, sir, gave us our nature and provided His wonderful out-of-doors for us to indulge that nature. So I affirm to you that we can claim the privilege of playing by the most sacred right under Heaven, *The Right of Boyhood!*

CAPTAIN STEARNE [*rising*]. Well said, young man, well said. While you were speaking, my own boyhood rose vividly before me, and I also caught a picture of a pair of boys at their play beneath the distant groves and hedges of England. One is an officer's son, while the other is only a private's boy; but the call of boyhood is universal and its rights are not to be trampled upon or tampered with. Go back to your pastimes, my lads. Your playground will be bothered no more.

Boys [*in unison*]. Hooray for Captain Stearne and The Rights of Boyhood.

CURTAIN

TRUE LOVE'S COURSE

CHARACTERS

JUGHEAD BROWN, *matrimonial candidate*

SANDUSKY WHITE, *his one constituent*

SCENE: *Living-room of White home*

Discovered: SANDUSKY and JUGHEAD seated near each other.

JUGHEAD. Yes, suhree, I tells yo' fo' a factuality, Honey-footses, de minit I landed in dis town an' focused my optional orbs on yo' face an' form, I knowed right then that I wuz gonna be guilty ob envelopin' a fragile feelin' fo' yo' an' conspiracy t' promulgate co'tship fo'thwith.

DUSKY. Really, now, Jughead, wuz yo' attracted by my dull pussonality?

JUGHEAD. Wuz I? Why Dusky, Ise willin' an' ready t' make Alfred David befo' a Note uv a Republican dat I wuz jest lak i'on filin's an' you wuz jest lak a magnet. As fo' yo' pussonality, I though yo' had on de bes' lookin' one dat wuz present.

DUSKY. Oh, yo'll flattah me!

JUGHEAD. No, I won' neithah. Not ef I knows it, at least. I don't want yo' no flattah nor what yo' am now. I likes cu'ves an' tu'ns on de human frame, 'stead uv angles an' co'nahs.

DUSKY. Oh, you do?

JUGHEAD. Yes'm, I does. I got mahse'f cut one time on a flattened out gal's shouldah blade.

DUSKY [*suspiciously*]. Oh, then, yo's been in de lovin' bizness befo'?

JUGHEAD. Well, I wouldn't ezackly call it much uv a bizness.

DUSKY. Why not call it a bizness? Yo' wuz prob'ly *engaged* in de cou'se of it, wuzn't yo'?

JUGHEAD. P'raps dat's true, in a way; but de only dividen' I got on de wind-up wuz jest a *note*.

DUSKY. Wuz it promissory?

JUGHEAD. No, hit was oblige-atory.

DUSKY. Yo' means obligatory.

JUGHEAD. I means what I said. Dat wuz a oblige-atory note.

DUSKY. I nevah did heah uv no such kinda note lak dat befo'. Esplain yo'se'f a little mo' in detail.

JUGHEAD. Well, de reason dat I says dat note wuz oblige-atory is 'cause dis gal I wuz Tipperaryily consortin' wid, she says in de note dat huh ex-husban' had come back, so it wuz oblige-atory on my pa't t' evaporate de premises at once.

DUSKY [*disappointed*]. An' I thought all de time dat I wuz yo' fust love.

JUGHEAD [*airily*]. Oh no, fust is fo' most, yo' knows.

DUSKY. An' yo' had dis affai' wid dat othah woman befo' yo' made promises to me!

JUGHEAD. Well, all I c'n say 'bout dat is, dat yo' should have happenated along sooner, an' injected yo'se'f into my life. I reckon I ain't t' blame 'cause I nevah met yo' befo' I did.

DUSKY. Yeah, but Jughead, ef yo'd had de leastes' pa'ticle of pschycic feelin', yo'd a-knowed not t' fall in love till yo' met me.

JUGHEAD. No, dat's de trouble. Ise allays had too much cyclone feelin'.

DUSKY. Yo' previous actions don't evidence yo' axiom.

JUGHEAD. I don't keer how many acks an' axes yo' bring in, jest so's yo' don't use none uv 'em on me; but I tells yo' I knows what Ise talkin' 'bout, Dusky.

DUSKY. I don't think yo' does.

JUGHEAD. Yes, I does, too. Ise plumb full ob cyclone feelin's.

DUSKY. Well, dat's de fust time I evah knowed uv a pusson's pschycic feelin's t' induce 'em t' fall in love wid evahthing dat com along uv de opposite sex.

JUGHEAD. But Dusky, yo' fails t' un'erstan'.

DUSKY. I evidemply does.

JUGHEAD. De reason I says it wuz a cyclone feelin' is 'cause I wuz simply tuck by storm.

DUSKY [*firmly*]. Well, den, yo' c'n jest blow yo'se'f away f'm heah, yo' whirlwin' uv human emotions.

JUGHEAD [*conciliatingly*]. Now wait a minit, Honey-bunch.

DUSKY. No wait about it, yo's done an' sold. Now ship yo'se'f away f'm heah.

JUGHEAD. Let me esplain —

DUSKY [*interrupting*]. Yo' needn't esplain nothin' t' me, yo' perfidious fien'.

JUGHEAD. Now lookah heah, Toodlums, yo' ain't givin' me no square meal—I mean deal.

DUSKY. I ain't givin' yo' nothin' no mo', big boy, but de ai' an' lots uv it.

JUGHEAD. Does yo' mean by dat—

DUSKY. I jest means by dat fo' yo' t' count yo'se'f again; yo' ain't *so many*.

JUGHEAD. Oh well, fo' dat mattah, yo' might try takin' yo' tempe'tuah. Yo' ain't *so warm*.

DUSKY. Why don't yo' go on back to dat othah woman an' git yo'se'f some uv huh secon' han' love an' wa'med ovah vittles?

JUGHEAD. Well, dere's two good reasons why I don't.

DUSKY. Am dat all?

JUGHEAD. Yeah, an' yo's one uv 'em.

DUSKY [*somewhat mollified*]. An' what's de othah'n?

JUGHEAD. Dat ex-husban'.

DUSKY [*stiffening again*]. Well, move on, black boy. I done tole yo' dat I'd gib yo' de ai'.

JUGHEAD. Oh, yo's done gib me de ai', den? Well, dat bein' de case, what's de chorus?

DUSKY. De chorus am, "Bye-bye, Blackbird."

JUGHEAD [*rising to go*]. Bein' as yo's so musical, den, tell me some place t' go.

DUSKY. Why, go "Way Down Upon de Swanee Rivah."

JUGHEAD. Whe'e am de Swanee Rivah?

DUSKY. Why, its "Far, far away."

JUGHEAD. Aw, Angel Ankles!

DUSKY. An' don't be callin' me none uv dem private names no mo', eithah. I wants t' fergit that I evah knowed yo' an' nevah be reminded uv it. So be on yo' way.

JUGHEAD. Aw, wait a momentum uv a minit.

DUSKY. Evah minit dat passes an' evah wud yo' says jest only makes wuss mattahs baddah.

JUGHEAD. But, Angel Ankles, yo' ain't gonna sho nuff make me go away f'm yo' sassiety, am yo'?

DUSKY. I mos' indeedly am. Yo' jest mought as well git t' feelin' sorry fo' yo'se'f 'cause Ise gonna quit yo' lak a hen dat won't set quits a nest.

JUGHEAD. Aw, pshaw, now, dat ain't no way t' talk.

DUSKY. It am de way Ise talkin', anyhow.

JUGHEAD. But yo' knows dat I loves yo', excludedly, conclusibly, an' accusively.

DUSKY. Dem's nice soundin' wuds; but dey ain't removin' de unlovely po'trait uv yo' love fo' dat othah female.

JUGHEAD. Hones' t' actualness, I nevah axually loved dat woman.

DUSKY [*sarcastically*]. Am dat so?

JUGHEAD. Not only dat, but I nevah loved nobody but yo' own sweet se'f, Sandusky.

DUSKY. Niggah, don't set the'e befo' me an' intrude sich illogical idiosyncracies upon my intelligence.

JUGHEAD. Dat's right, go ahead an' call me all de names yo' c'n think uv, but I ain't lyin' t' nobody when I says what I did.

DUSKY. Yo' lies so much I cain't hahdly tell when is yo' or when ain't yo'.

JUGHEAD. Aw no, Sugarfoots, I nevah lies much t' yo'.

DUSKY. No, yo' jest only lies so much dot yo's gittin' concentrated,

JUGHEAD. But Sandusky, I deconfirms dat I nevah axually loved no female woman but Sandusky White.

DUSKY. Oh, am dat so, Mistah Jughead Brown?

JUGHEAD. Dat's so an' more so. In fack, it am so so dat it am double-stitched.

DUSKY. Well, jest please esplain how it wuz dot yo' wuz so skeered uv dis woman's husban', ef yo's not enameled uv de woman?

JUGHEAD. Oh— a— well— yo' see—

DUSKY. I don't see nothin' but de impressive impression dat yo' wuz wile about dat woman an' had mos' undoubtedly an' in-double-tree been braggin' on huh cookin' an' gittin' huh t' press yo' pants, among othah incriminatin' evidences uv guilt.

JUGHEAD. But honey, I still mantames dat I nevah loved dat woman.

DUSKY. Am dat all yo' c'n say? [*Mimics.*] "I nevah loved dat woman. I nevah loved nobody but yo', Dusky."

JUGHEAD. Sweetness, why don't yo' b'lieves what I tells yo'?

DUSKY. I has allays been taught not to lissen t' th' song uv th' siren.

JUGHEAD. Well, gosh-a-mighty, dat don't apply t' me. I ain't no Syrian.

DUSKY. Well, bein' as yo' jest persists in 'peatin' an' repeatin' dem wuds, "I love yo'," I guess I'll hafta assept 'em.

JUGHEAD. Good fo' dat!

DUSKY. But I cain't only afford t' take 'em at face value, an' look what a face dey come out uv.

JUGHEAD. Aw shuckins! Yo' *knows* dat I love yo'.

DUSKY. How come yo' wuz one uv de angles in de triangle dats tryin' t' angle anothah man out uv his wife?

JUGHEAD. Aw, I nevah did axually want dat woman fo' huhse'f's sake.

DUSKY. How come she wuz evah a incident in yo' life a-tall, then?

JUGHEAD. Well, I guess I wuz sorter what yo' might call infactuated wid huh at one time.

DUSKY. So yo' fin'ly admits it, then?

JUGHEAD. Yeah, I admits t' hangin' 'roun' dat woman t' some extension.

DUSKY. Why don't yo' go on back an' hang some mo'?

JUGHEAD. I wuzn't hangin' 'roun' out uv no love I had fo' de woman or no pussonal cha'm she had fo' me.

DUSKY. Dat's kinda ha'd t' b'lieve, Jughead.

JUGHEAD. Nevah-the-some-how, it am a fack.

DUSKY. Well, what on earth wuz yo' riskin' yo' hide fo', then?

JUGHEAD. I had a fowl pu'pose in view.

DUSKY. Oh, yo' brazen-faced demon!

JUGHEAD. Yeah, my intentions wuz fowl. She wuz a awful good cook an' she had a big flock uv chickens.

DUSKY. So dat esplains it. No wondah that po' long suf'rin' husban' had a unkin' feelin' in yo' direction. I un'erstan's it puffleckly now, 'cause I knows yo' weakness fo' fried poultry.

JUGHEAD. Den yo' am satisfied 'bout dat unpleasant pa't uv my past, am yo', Angel Ankles?

DUSKY. Why, co'se I is. I nevah lost no pullets in de deal. Why should I be bothe'd about it?

JUGHEAD. Ise been tellin' yo' an' m'se'f too, that yo' shouldn't.

DUSKY. But the's jest only one thing that I wants t' hab settled yit.

JUGHEAD. What am it, Sweetness?

DUSKY. I wants t' know ef, by any chance, while yo' wuz hibernatin' 'roun' dat female, yo' developed a taste fo' huh cookin' dat might revert t' yo' mem'ry an' depreciate mine.

JUGHEAD. An' I immejiately answers, *no, absotutely, positively.*

DUSKY. Well, I once mo' assep's yo' love an' offahs yo' mine.

JUGHEAD. Honey, dem wuds am a boom t' my hearin'. [*Comes closer.*] An' dat smile on yo' face as yo' says it am like gittin' a glimpse uv Paradise.

DUSKY. Oh, yo' big, black bunch o' sweetness!

JUGHEAD. Say, Dusky, looka heah. Yo's got a good job an' Ise got—lots uv ambition, what's t' hinder us f'm indulgin' in matter-moany?

DUSKY. Nothin' ain't been hinderin' it fo' de las' six weeks but yo' bashfulness.

JUGHEAD. So yo' aseps me for' wuss or none at all?

DUSKY. Consider yo'se'f a engaged man.

JUGHEAD. Well, I ain't nevah gonna be bashful no mo', an' jest t' show I mean what I say, I wants t' ax a question.

DUSKY. Yes?

JUGHEAD. What'll yo' do ef I gits up cross some mawnin' an' bangs things aroun' 'cause de coffee am cold?

DUSKY. Oh, I'll make it hot fo' yo', an' I don't mean de coffee.

CURTAIN

ONLY AN ONLY CHILD

CHARACTERS

MA TUCKER, *a doting mother*

PA TUCKER, *hardly so doting*

TOM, *the only child*

SCENE: *Breakfast room*

COSTUMES: *Regular "old folks" garb for PA and MA. Night gown and cap for TOM.*

Discovered: MA and PA at table.

PA [*drinks coffee, sputters and gurgles*]. My cripes, Ma! That coffee musta been warmed over, fer shore. It's too bloomin' hot t' jest had one heatin'. Ma, ye've burnt me bad.

MA. Y' shouldn't orter be so greedy an' anxious, Pa. Where's th' manners I been tryin' t' teach y' fer thirty years? Why'n't y' use yer sasser?

PA. Use nothin'! Why'n't y' tell me ye'd poured me out a solution uv consecrated lye?

MA. I thought shorely y' had gumption enough in yer noggin t' know that anything that's boilin' 'll burn.

PA. What about Pee-rox-ide?

MA. Now don't be silly, Pa. Y' know what I mean.

PA. Yeah, I know ye're mean. Anybody's mean, that'll willfully an' delib'rately an' with malice aforethought up and scald all th' hide out uv a feller's mouth an' ha'f his goozle.

MA. There y' go again. I never scalded y'. I never told y' t' try t' drink yer coffee sizzlin' hot like that. Y' needn't pack th' blame on me.

PA. Well, y' never told me *not to*, an' th' sin uv omission is jest as bad as th' sin uv comission.

MA. Tut, y' ain't hurt much or y' couldn't set thar an' beller like a yearlin' ca'f that's lost its ma.

PA. Ain't hurt, nothin'! [*Talks with his mouth wide open.*] I tell ye I'm plumb scalded. Th' hide's jest a-hangin'.

MA. I don't hardly think so. But ain't I told y' an' told y' time an' again, not t' be so ignorant as t' say *hide*?

PA. What'll I say, then?

MA. Why, say *skin*.

PA. My mouth's burnt so bad it hurts when I shut it.

MA. Oh, I don't think it's serious.

PA. No, it ain't a seared mess; but it's awful bad cooked up.

MA. You'll git over that an' never know th' difference, a hundred years f'm now.

PA. No, I won't neither. I'm li'ble t' develop gander green.

MA. What if you did?

PA. I'd hafta pasturize m'se'f with goslin' grease.

TOMMY, *off stage, interrupts.*

TOM. Baw-w-w!

MA [*starting*]. That's Thomas.

PA. A stranger'd think it wuz a young mule.

MA. I'd be ashamed, Pa.

PA. I *am* ashamed uv 'im. If you'd let me, I'd take some o' that out uv 'im, too.

TOM [*still off stage, whines*]. Maw-w-w.

MA [*rising hurriedly*]. What is it, son?

TOM [*off stage and still whining*]. I want up-p-p.

PA. Git up, then. Y' ain't tied, I reckon.

TOM [*off stage*]. I wanta be took up-p-p.

MA [*going out*]. Mother's comin,' darlin'.

Exit MA.

PA. *Darlin'*. He remin's me uv a yearlin' calf. He's plumb aggrafrettin' on account uv how his ma's spiled 'im, an' I b'lieve he's gittin' wuss ever' day uv his life. If he gits much wuss I don't know what's t' be done.

MA [*off stage*]. Pa!

PA. What?

MA. Come here.

PA. Whatcha want?

MA. Thomas wants to be tuk up by 'is pa this mornin'.

PA [*rising unwillingly*]. He needs t' be tuk up by th' hair o' th' head an' have a tuck run in 'is pants with a butter paddle.

TOM [*off stage*]. Hurry up, Pa, I wanta rise.

PA [*going out*]. If I had my way, I'd make y' rise in a place that wouldn't permit y' t' set no more fer a week.

Exit PA.

MA [*off stage*]. Kiss yer pa good mornin', son.

TOM [*off stage*]. I don't wanna kiss him good mornin', ma. His whiskers tickle me nearly to death.

MA [*off stage*]. Oh, I'd kiss 'im though, son.

TOM [*off stage*]. No-o-o. I'd as soon kiss a billy goat as t' kiss him in th' mouth.

PA [*off stage*]. Well, nobody ain't worryin' about y' not kissin' me. I'd jest as lief be licked in th' face by a young houn' pup.

MA [*off stage*]. Well, take Precious up, Pa, an' le's all eat.

PA [*off stage*]. Ow! You little whippersnapper, leggo my whiskers! Leggo, I say.

MA [*off stage*]. You mustn't do that, son. That's rude.

TOM [*off stage*]. It looks like corn silk.

Enter PA, carrying TOM astride his neck. MA follows closely behind. PA tries to put TOM down, but the boy clings fast to him.

PA. Leggo, y' little leech! Yer ride's over now. Git down! Ow! Ye're chokin' me. Git down!

TOM. I want Ma to take me down.

MA [*advancing*]. All right. Mother'll take her precious baby down, if he wants down.

MA starts to take him down, but he gives a lurch which upsets PA and knocks MA backward.

PA [*on the floor*]. Uh-h-h! What in tarnation d' y' mean,

y' little reperbate? I'll bust yer goll-durned caboosus fer that, as shore as I'm a-livin'.

PA rises angrily and starts for TOM, who runs to MA and wraps himself in her skirt for protection.

MA [*shielding TOM*]. Now Pa, that wuz only a accident. Don't git so riled.

PA. Like thunderation it was! That was a pure hard-down, premeditated co-instigation, an' I'm gonna land on 'is island outpost fer it, too.

TOM. You can't either, for the doctor said a sudden shock would make my nose bleed.

PA [*reaching for TOM*]. Yer nose ain't yer island outpost, my sonny-man.

TOM. Ma, Ma, he's gonna get me!

PA [*catches TOM's ear*]. Come along uv me, you young rapscaillon. I'll learn y' how t' cut yer capers.

TOM. Ow-w-w! Ma, he's dislocatin' my ear!

MA [*fiercely*]. You big brute! Stop pullin' that child's ear! [*Catches PA's ears and pulls savagely.*] I'll show y' how it feels.

PA [*releases TOM*]. My gosh, Ma! Ye're stretchin' my hearin' apparatuses till, if I's t' have my picture took, both uv 'em 'd show in a side view.

MA. I told y' I'd show y' how it felt.

PA. Well, that'll do! Ye've showed me enough. Th' feelin's done settled in my boots, an' I c'n see about six inches uv ear stickin' out on each side uv my head.

TOM [*gleefully*]. They sure *are* stretched, Ma.

MA [*releases PA*]. Next time don't be so hasty about Cæsaring a child without just and righteous cause.

PA. My cripes! I never knowed till now that a feller's ears wuz made out uv rubber. Mine's as eplastic as a sponge. Th' only trouble is that I'm afeered they won't go back t' their former shape, though.

TOM. Maw-w-w! I wanta eat.

MA [*patting TOM's shoulder*]. All right, Precious, you shall have your breakfast now.

TOM starts to sit at the table.

PA. Hold on there, a minit, young man! I jest lost one battle; we're gonna have another'n before you set down t' eat without washin'.

MA. Now, what's th' matter uv you, Pa?

PA. That young bumpkin ain't gonna set at no table an' eat with me unless he washes.

TOM. No-o-o, th' water's too cold. I don't wanta wash. Th' water's cold as ice.

PA [*threateningly*]. I'll make it hot fer y', young jackanapes. Understan' that?

MA [*placatingly*]. Yes, be a little man now, an' wash yer face an' han's, son.

TOM goes to basin and pours out some water.

TOM. I'll wash my hands; but my face don't need it. I ain't used it fer nothin' since it was washed.

PA. You'll wash that mug, too.

MA [*warningly*]. Now, Pa, don't git too obstreperous an' hasty. That's no way t' control a child. Y' must practice kin'ness an' patience, 'stead uv overbearin' harshness.

PA [*covering his ears with his hands*]. Well, then, you try some uv yer faith healin' 'im fer a start, an' if it don't work, the's gonna be more war in th' camp.

MA [*very gently*]. Now, Thomas, y' know Mother loves y' an' wouldn't tell y' anything t' harm y' fer th' world.

TOM. You told me that that mustard plaster wouldn't burn; but it did.

PA [*bristling*]. Don't git too sassy, young feller. Remember yer pa is still here. [*Shakes fist at TOM in a menacing manner.*]

MA [*to PA*]. An' don't you git too rampe-squeejious, neither. Jest bear in min' that yore wife is still here, too.

PA. Go ahead an' try yore lovin' kin'ness a little further, an' if it don't work, I'm gonna try my methods, regardless uv hide or hair.

MA [*almost pleadingly*]. Now, Thomas, you must wash your face, son. George Washington always washed his face.

TOM. I don't care if he did. I ain't George Washington.

PA [*under his breath*]. I'm gonna land on y' so hard in a minit an' a ha'f that y' won't know *who* y' are.

MA. But Washington was a mighty great man. Don't y' *want* t' be like him?

TOM. No, I don't.

MA. Why, Thomas!

TOM. I don't. Look at th' kind of britches he wore and them girl's stockin's, too. An' look at that long hair.

That shows he was a sissy, even if he did wash his face.

PA. Why, that was th' style then. He was in th' height *uv* fashion in his day.

TOM. Well, fashions have changed an' customs have, too.

PA. They're gonna change some more, too, 'specially in this very house.

TOM. Ma won't let you whip me.

PA takes off his belt, roughly thrusts MA aside, and advances upon TOM.

PA. We'll see about that. I'm gonna be boss in this house fer a few minits, if it costs me a lawsuit in Hades.

MA [*weakly*]. Pa!

PA [*fiercely*]. Keep yer mouth shut, Ma, an' stay right where y' are. I'm gonna make this young villun wash his face, or I'll raise whelps on 'is back as big as biscuits.

TOM [*subdued*]. Don't whip me, Pa. I'll wash. I'll wash. *TOM plunges his face in the water and bathes with a great sputtering and splashing.*

MA [*aside*]. What on earth has come over Pa? I'll hafta tell 'im about th' little graves t' tame 'im down, I guess. That always works.

PA takes down a towel from the wall.

PA. Now come over here, young scapegoat, an' let me dry y' off.

TOM. You'll hurt my sore ear.

PA. I'll hurt y' worse, if y' don't. Come on here!

TOM advances slowly. PA seizes him and rubs his hands, face, neck and ears briskly.

TOM [*wriggling*]. Oh-h! Ow-w! Ouch!

MA. Don't be so rough, Pa. No need to twist his head off a-dryin' 'im off.

PA [*sternly*]. Keep yer tongue between yer teeth Ma, if y' don't want some uv th' same med'cine. Now, young varmit, you go git a com' an' run it through that hair an' then come back t' yer breakfas'.

Exit TOM willingly. PA pops the towel at him as he goes.

MA. Now, Pa, I want t' tell y' somethin'.

PA. Maybe I want t' tell *you* somethin', too.

MA. This is somethin' solemn an' serious an' sad.

PA. What I've got t' say might be classed along th' same line. I'm gonna tell you here an' now that that boy has got t' be made mind or the'll be no doin' with 'im by th' time he gits much bigger.

MA. An' I want t' remin' you uv what th' doctor told us when Thomas was a baby.

PA. Aw, t' heck with th' doctor!

MA. Now, Pa, y' musn't talk like that. Remember them five little graves uv our first-born children.

PA [*softening*]. An' Thomas is all we've got left.

MA. An' y' must remember, Pa, that th' doctor said we'd hafta be mighty keerful with 'im, if we ever raised 'im. Y' know he said Thomas had a weak heart, like th' others.

PA [*remorsefully*]. Mebbe I was a bit rough with th' lad. But it won't hurt 'im none t' mind, Ma.

MA. Not if y' c'n git 'im t' do it with gentle methods. A rough word or sudden shock might mean the death uv th' boy.

PA. I'll be more consid'rate f'm now on in my dealin's with th' lad; but I'm gonna make 'im mind, if possible.

MA. Well, don't do nothin' rash, now.

Reënter TOM. He has his hair combed straight down over his eyes.

MA [*pats TOM's head*]. Now there's a fine young man.

TOM [*watching PA furtively*]. Pa went an' excited me while ago, Ma. I feel nervous.

PA. Mebbe Pa was a little rough, son; but set down now an' eat yer breakfas' an' le's fergit all about that.

They all sit at the table.

TOM [*looks about with a scowl*]. I couldn't git my hair combed good, 'cause I was so nervous.

MA. Now, see there, Pa. What'd I tell y'?

PA. Never mind that now, son. Go ahead an' eat yer breakfas' an' y'll feel better.

TOM [*encouraged to be bolder*]. I don't see nothin' I want.

MA [*quickly*]. What d' y' want, Angel?

PA [*mildly*]. Now, Ma, here's a-plenty for anybody t' eat. Don't go t' sp'ilin' 'im, now.

MA. You ain't fit t' perscribe. What is it y' want, Thomas? Tell Ma an' she'll git it.

TOM. I want some—some—mucilage on toast.

PA [*explosively*]. You'll not git it at this table, sir!

MA. Now, Pa, be calm. Why do you want mucilage on toast, Thomas?

TOM. I want it—to keep my tongue from stickin' out at Pa all th' time.

MA. Here's some toast. Pa, you git th' glue offa th' shelf up there. [*Puts toast on TOM's plate.*]

PA. I'll never do it. No child uv mine'll be aided in any sich tom-foolery by an act uv mine.

MA. I reckon, then, ye'd ruther see six little crosses where's five, then?

PA [*relenting*]. But, Ma, that's scan'lous an' unheard uv.

MA. But Pa, he wants it. Le's not cross 'im or fret 'im any more this mornin'.

PA [*rises reluctantly*]. Well, if ye're gonna put it like that, I'll git it.

PA takes a jar from the shelf which is labeled in bold letters "Glue," but which is filled with white sirup. He pours some over the toast on TOM's plate.

TOM. Oh goody, goody! that's what I wanted a long time.

PA [*reseating himself*]. Jest fer a little I'd order a barrel uv it an' stick yer head in it.

MA [*warningly*]. Careful now, Pa.

TOM. I want Pa to cut it up for me.

PA. Cut it up yerse'f. Y' ain't tied ner paralyzed, I reckon'.

MA. Aw, cut it up fer 'im, Pa. It won't be much trouble an' it might save his life.

PA [*takes TOM'S plate and cuts toast in quarters*]. I'd 'bout as soon not have no son as t' have one like this.

TOM. Ma, I love you more'n I do Pa.

PA. Pa don't *keer*. [*Passes the plate back to TOM.*] Now, you be sure t' eat ever' bite uv that stuff.

TOM looks at the plate thoughtfully.

MA. Now, what's th' matter? Why don't y' eat yer toast, son?

TOM. I want Pa t' take a bite first.

PA [*jumping up angrily*]. I'll never do it! I'll wring 'is neck first! I won't have sich a boy on my place! I'll be hanged if I will! That beats all I ever heard uv in all my life put together! Ma, you c'n take a bite uv that stuff if y' want to; but here's where I renege.

TOM. I don't want Ma to. I want Pa t' do it.

PA [*starts for TOM*]. I'll do it! I'll pull yer head off an' show it to y'. That's what I'll do, you young good-for-nothing, you!

MA [*intervening*]. Now, Pa! Sit down! If I have t' git y' by th' ears again, I'll do it.

PA covers his ears and sits.

TOM. Give 'em another stretch, Ma!

MA. No, I want t' talk reason first. Now, Pa, jest think uv them five little mounds uv our other children. Would you delib'rately place Thomas at their side by refusing such a small favor?

TOM. Ma, I'm gittin' nervous. If Pa don't take a bite, I b'lieve I'm gonna have a spell.

PA. Have it an' be done with it. I won't eat that mess uv stuff, if I never see another boy.

MA. It won't hurt y'. Jest take a little bite. Look how pale Thomas is.

PA. Let 'im *be* pale. I'd as lief not have no boy as one likè that.

MA. Now, Pa, you don't mean that. Think how lonesome an' dreary life'd be fer me an' you all alone by ourse'ves. What'd we do 'thout Thomas t' cheer us an' brighten our lives?

PA [*relenting*]. He is a sight uv comp'ny.

MA. Take jest a little bite, Pa. It won't hurt y' none an' it might be th' salvation an' turnin' point uv 'is whole life in more ways than one.

PA [*reverently*]. I hope he does turn fer th' better.

TOM [*gasping*]. Ma, I want Pa t' hurry up.

MA [*takes a piece of the toast on her fork and offers it to PA*]. Here, Pa, quick, take it before he faints.

PA [*grimaces*]. Ugh! That's an awful dose; but I'll take it this one time.

TOM. Te-hee hee hee! Pa ain't so stuck-up as he thought he was; but he will be.

PA takes the bread and sirup in his mouth and chews it with much grimacing and effort at getting it down.

PA [*drinks water*]. Now, young man, if you pull off another tantrum like that—I don't know what is liable t' happen. I'm liable t' have a spell m'self.

MA. Yes, go on, now, an' eat yer breakfas', son. Pa done what y' wanted 'im t' do.

TOM. *I ain't gonna do it!* He went and took the bite I wanted!

Quick CURTAIN as PA keels over backward.

THE SIX S's ORGANIZE

CHARACTERS

FRED
PERRY
BERT

EARL
FRANK
JERRY

SCENE: *A barn loft with several bales of hay about.*

Enter PERRY. (Note: By rising upright, from a crouching posture immediately offstage, the entrance of each of the characters can be made to appear as though they had just climbed up a ladder.)

PERRY [*looking about cautiously*]. Th' coast is clear, fellers. C'mon up.

Enter FRED.

FRED. No enemies in sight?

PERRY. None that's visible t' th' naked eye.

Enter BERT.

BERT. We better look good in ever' hole 'n' corner.

Enter EARL.

EARL. Yeah, we must.

Enter FRANK.

FRANK. We mustn't take no chances. The's too much at stake.

Enter JERRY.

JERRY. No chances fer me, that ain't nec'sary.

All go about peering into every hole and corner, even turning over the bales of hay.

BERT. I don't see nothin' suspicious lookin', fellers. How 'bout th' findin's uv th' rest?

FRANK. I b'lieve we're unnoticed and unsuspected.

PERRY. That's predentically why I told ever' feller t' come a dif'rent way an' sep'rate an' by hisse'f. I didn't want no awe-spicious onlookers t' know our bizness bet-ter'n we know it ourse'ves.

EARL. Well, nobody knows where I am but us six here, an' Heck.

FRED. Same thing here. An' I doubt if even that many knows th' full purpose uv th' meetin' or what we're here t' try an accomplice.

JERRY. I guess you know as much about it as I do.

BERT. Or *me*. But I wuz satisfied Perry wouldn't never a-called us out th' way he did without some good an' valiant reason.

FRANK. That's just th' way I felt about it, too; so, soon's I got a chance t' sneak away f'm home 'thout bein' noticed, I beat it.

PERRY. Be seated, fellers. I'm glad t' see th' confidence you've all bestrowed in me by comin' out here t'night at my s'licitation 'thout knowin' what fer. I want t' tell y' also that th' confidence which y'all have infested in me shall never be abused or b'trayed.

EARL. Boy, ol' Perry's a speaker, ain't he?

BERT. He's a reg'lar oracter, when he wants t' be an' tries very hard.

FRED. Le's hurry up an' come t' bizness, fellers. I gotta hurry up an' git back home b'fore I'm discovered absent, an' pronounced missin'.

PERRY. Just what I'm gonna do, Fred. Now t' git down t' brass tacks an' th' bottom uv things, we all know how Miss Sanders is a-standin' in with th' girls an' how th' girls is a-givin' us dirt at ever' opportunity.

BERT. I reckon *I* do.

FRANK. Yes, an' I'm purty well fed up on it, too.

EARL. An' *me*. Nobody ever gits any Merits in our room any more, but some girl.

JERRY. An' nobody ever gets any *Demerits* but some boy. It's altogether too one-sided t' suit me.

FRED. I had an idee that wuz th' motif fer this meetin'.

PERRY. Well, I d'cided that us six fellers had better git our thinkin' caps on an' put our heads t'gether t' device mean ways t' change things up a little. Th' rest uv them dum' bells in our room ain't gonna be no he'p to us, so we might as well git busy.

FRANK. That's a fact we all agree with. Why, take Ferdie Saltsman, f'r instance; he's so sissified I bet he looks under th' bed ever' night before he crawls in it. He wouldn't be no bennyfit t' th' cause in makin' any strat-ajams, nor nothin'.

JERRY. No, he wouldn't be no more use than a hole on a mole or a wart on a flea.

BERT. Why, so far as that's concerned, the's not enough craftiness in th' rest uv th' whole bunch t' ketch a one-eyed 'possum that wuz already hulled.

JERRY. An' now, what're we gonna do t' stop th' girls from tattlin', perched up here in this hayloft like a bunch uv sparrers on a straw stack?

PERRY. Why Jerry, I'm s'prised at you! We're gonna organate ourselves into a band an' co-operize together in th' common cause till we determinate th' source uv our mally-dick-shuns.

EARL. Atta-boy! Lis'en at ol' Perry sling the langwidge.

JERRY. Sure, I know that. But what'll we co-operize on? We hafta have some plans t' go by.

EARL. Why, le's form a secret lodge. We c'n have lots uv fun an' accomplice our purposes, too.

PERRY. That's predentically what I called you fellers t'gether fer t'night.

FRED. What'll we call our lodge?

FRANK. We c'n think uv plenty uv good names fer it. I know a good'n.

FRED. What?

FRANK. Th' Samson Lodge. Samson wuz th' strongest man in th' worl'. He c'd do anything he wanted to, nearly, an' he never even had his hair cut till just b'fore he died an' that's how come he got killed.

BERT. An' he wuz tattled on by a woman, too, that caused it. I think that fits us purty well.

JERRY. Yes, it does. Th' Samson Lodge. That sounds purty good, don't it?

EARL. That is a good *idee* fer a name; but we want some-thin' more impressive than that.

FRANK [*hotly*]. More impressive than Samson? You must surely be gone batty. What'd be any more impressive than ten thousan' Phillistines, or Phillipines, whatever they wuz, that Samson went an' soaked with th' jaw bone uv an ass?

PERRY. I reckon that'd be 'bout as impressive a scene as c'd be seen. Ten thousan' fellers filled' with beans an' stacked up in a pile.

BERT. An' 'bout this tattlin' an' tellin' tales, I guess y' know what Samson done 'bout some tales, don't y'?

EARL. No. I don't. What'd he do?

BERT. Why, he went an' set fire t' three hundred foxes' tails an' turned 'em loose in th' wheat fields uv th' bean-eaters, or whatever they wuz, an' burnt up all their wheat.

FRED. We'll hafta think uv some kind uv a strat-a-jam like that an' use it on our enemies.

EARL. Well, I ain't kickin' on namin' our lodge after Samson. I think Samson is a good name. But I had ref'rence t' includin' somethin' else that'd describe *us*.

JERRY. That would be all right, fellers. Say somethin' like "Th' Sons of Samson." 'Course we ain't really Samson's sons, but then we ain't nobody's daughters, an' that'd be namin' our lodge after Samson an' makin' a ref'rence t' ourse'ves, too.

FRED. Now, that's what I call th' logical thing fer th' Lodge t' lodge on fer its name. But as we're also a private an' secret body, why not say "Th' Secret Sons of Samson?"

EARL. That makes it sound a little bit like we wuz under a cloud. I like th' word *secret* if we c'n figger some way t' give a different meanin' to th' name as a whole.

BERT. Well, how 'bout sayin' "Th' Sons of Samson's Secret?"

PERRY. Say, lis'en, fellers, the's six uv us in th' lodge. Le's call ourse'ves "Th' Solemn an' Serious an' Sad Sons of Samson's Secret." Then we'll have a word fer ever' member.

FRANK. That makes six S's. We c'n 'breviate it down t' Th' Six S Lodge, then, for short.

JERRY. Wouldn't it sound better t' say "The Solemn and Serious Sons of Samson's Sad Secret"?

PERRY. Anybody else got a suggestion t' make concernin' th' name uv our lodge?

BERT. I think th' name s'gested by Jerry is hard t' beat m'se'f.

EARL. Me too. It's descriptive an' impressive an' dignified, an' ever'thing else that th' name uv a important secret society orter be.

FRANK. I'm in favor uv adoptin' it m'se'f. I thought uv th' Samson part.

FRED. Well, all in favor uv callin' this organization, "The Solemn and Serious Sons of Samson's Sad Secret," make it known by saying "I."

All say "I" except PERRY.

PERRY. I'm in favor uv th' name all right; but I ain't in favor uv Fred takin' so much authority by puttin' a question b'fore th' meetin'. I'm th' one that called this meetin' an' I'm gonna be th' main ram-roddin' mogul uv it.

FRED. Oh, you are? Maybe we'd better settle that by 'lectin' somebody by a vote.

JERRY. Sure, I'm th' feller fer th' place. I got lots uv steam an' push. I'd make a good ramrod.

FRANK. Well, now, bein's I'm th' one that thought up th' idee fer th' Lodge name, I think I'm entitled t' be th' leader uv it.

EARL. Maybe *you do* think so. I don't, though. I feel like when it comes t' schemin' schemes an' plannin'

strat-a-jams, which is the real object uv our 'sociation, I got all uv y' beat. So therefore I think I deserve t' be called th' main wilder uv th' ass's jawbone.

BERT. You work your *jawbone* enough all right. I want t' tell y' all somethin', howsomever, that immediately an' unquestionably entitles me t' be th' main stem-winder in this chapter uv "Th' Solemn an' Serious Sons uv Samson's Sad Secret." I s'pose all uv y' knowed that my dad had a uniform in th' Knights uv Cold lumber, didn't y'? I c'd git it fer our mectin's an' it'd be a credit an' extinction t' th' order t' have a presidin' officer dressed up in a uniform.

FRED. Well, I'm not so contrary or se'f-admirin' m'se'f. Of course, I'd be mighty glad t' git honored with th' position; but I'm willin' t' let th' gang vote on who they want.

JERRY. That's a noble spirit, Fred. I join in with you in callin' fer a vote.

FRANK. Yeah, le's vote.

EARL. Le's vote by secert ballot, so's nobody won't know how anybody else voted.

PERRY. Huh! You votin' fer y'se'f won't do y' no good. I'm gonna be th' president uv this lodge an' I ain't even gonna vote.

BERT. Wait till th' votin's over, why don't y', Perry?

JERRY. Ever'body make their own ballot an' write th' name uv their choice fer president on it.

All produce pencils and slips of paper on which they write, with the exception of PERRY.

FRED. Le's put all th' ballots in Perry's hat an' let him announce th' result. He orter have that much consideration fer callin' th' meetin'.

BERT. I'm gonna look at ever' ballot, too.

PERRY takes off his hat and collects the ballots in it.

PERRY. That suits me. Y' c'n all look, if y' want to. Th' result is gonna be in my favor, just th' same.

EARL. You talk mighty confident before th' votes is even counted.

FRANK. That's what I say, and him not votin' either.

PERRY. Just wait and see, is all I say.

JERRY. Call out th' votes an' let us see.

PERRY. This vote is cast fer Fred. Thought you didn't keer much who got it, Fred.

FRED. I didn't say I wouldn't have it, though.

PERRY. This one says, "Jerry."

JERRY. One an' one fer me an' Fred.

PERRY. This one is fer Bert.

BERT [*who has been looking at each ballot called out*].
That's right.

PERRY. Here's one fer Frank.

FRANK. One more an' I'll have it.

PERRY. And th' last one is fer Earl.

EARL. All uv us got one vote but Perry.

JERRY. That makes a tie, fer us five.

PERRY. You're right, Earl. There is a tie an' inasmuch as I never voted in th' first place I git t' d'cide th' tie.

FRED. You know me, Perry. I said t' give you credit fer callin' th' meetin'. Vote fer me.

PERRY. Now I'm gonna d'cide this in a manner that's fair an' square fer one an' all. Y'all wanted t' vote an' I let y' vote. Y' all tied up an' me not votin' in th' first place, I git t' untie y'. So I now decide in favor of Perry Winters. Now it's too late t' consider any plans t' git even with Miss Sanders an' th' girls t'night, so I'm gonna adjourn th' meetin' till t'morrow night, when we'll meet heré with more time an' opportunity t' accomplice some good fer our cause. (*Makes a splendid bow.*) Good night t' ever'boday from th' President an' Founder uv Chapter Number One of The Solemn and Serious Sons of Samson's Sad Secret.

CURTAIN

THE SIX S's HOLD A SESSION

This may be used, either as a consecutive act for THE SIX S's ORGANIZE, or as a complete and individual play.

CHARACTERS

FRANK
EARL
FRED

PERRY
JERRY
BERT

SCENE: *A hayloft. The bales of hay have been arranged along each side of the stage and on the Rear, for seats. Two bales are made into an altar at the Center. [Sacks of feed may be used instead of the hay if the latter is not available.] Two lanterns afford light.*

Discovered: PERRY and BERT arranging seats at Right of stage.

PERRY. Time we add to an' c'lect a little bit more, we're gonna have a swell an' up t' date lookin' lodge hall. It don't look so bad as it is.

BERT. No, it don't. If I hadn't a-been afraid Ma'd a got suspicious this ev'nin' when we left, I c'd a-brought some things from home that'd be lots uv benefit an' look mighty good up here.

PERRY. What've you got we c'd use, Bert?

BERT. I reckon Gran'pa's ol' Civil War s'ord 'd be a credit t' any lodge room's pair-uv-flat-nail-heads, wouldn't it?

PERRY. To be sure it would. Do y' 'spose y' c'd git it, though? is th' nex' question.

BERT. Sure, Mike, I c'n git it. I'll sneak it out some day 'an fetch it over.

PERRY. I wisht y' would. Just think uv havin' a real honest t' sure 'nough saber in our meetin' hall.

BERT. We'll hafta be awful keerful with it, though. It's as sharp as a ol' maid's tongue, an' somebody might git ampytated with it.

PERRY. We won't 'low nobody t' han'le it. We'll just use it fer ornamental an' sacrilegious purposes.

BERT. All right, then, I'll sneak it out th' first chance I git at it.

PERRY. Do that, Bert, an' I'll see that you git a position uv honor in th' org'nization as a reward fer your d'votion.

Enter FRED [as described in opening of the series].

FRED. H'y, fellers.

PERRY. H'lo, Fred.

BERT. H'y there.

FRED. Nobody here yit but you two?

BERT. Not 'nless y' count y'rse'f somebody.

FRED. You know what I meant.

PERRY. I guess th' others'll be here purty pronto. I think ever'budy understood last night that we wuz t' meet again t'night.

FRED. Yeah, they'll all be here if they can git away from home.

BERT. I hear somebody clim'in' th' ladder now.

Enter FRANK [according to usual manner].

FRANK [*looks about, then whistles in surprise*]. Say, this is some swell lodge hall, ain't it?

PERRY. 'Course it is. What'd y' think we organated las' night, a girls' dolly club?

FRED. Who fixed all this up so keen?

BERT. I and th' President and Founder there.

PERRY. Yeah, we fixed it. I went by an' asked his dad t' let 'im come home with me after school, an' we worked th' whole ev'nin'.

FRANK. Gosh, it sure looks swell.

Enter EARL, followed by JERRY.

EARL and JERRY. H'y, fellers.

OTHERS. H'y, fellers.

PERRY. Say, didn't I tell ever'budy t' come by hisself an' not bring nobody with 'im?

EARL. We did. I come in th' barn at one end an' met Jerry comin' in at th' other.

JERRY. Hones' we did. We met right at th' bottom uv th' ladder, an' he come on up it first an' then I follered 'im.

PERRY. Well, now, we don't want nobody 't see a whole gang comin' in or leavin' this place. This bizness has got t' be kep' secret, if we 'spect t' 'complice anything.

JERRY. Well, y'all know me. I'm as secret as a bald-headed bachelor com'in' out his wig.

PERRY. All right, then, we'll pass that up an' open our meetin' at once.

EARL. Ain't we gonna have no Rachel?

FRANK. Rachel? Rachel who?

BERT. Say, feller, this is a lodge room. It ain't no barbarium Turk's harem.

EARL. I know it; but we need a Rachel in our lodge, same's any other lodge needs one.

FRED. I thought we was organated fer th' sole an' express purpose uv combatlin' th' wimmen. An' here you are askin' fer one t' come in our midst.

JERRY. What's gone through you, Earl? We don't want no Rachel nor Rebecca, nor no other somebody in dresses, in th' Six S's.

EARL. I'm sorry if you fellers misunderstood me. I ain't no more in favor uv introducin' any such pollination in our midst as a woman, than anybody else.

FRANK. You better retrack what y' said, then, about longin' an' pinin' fer this here Rachel girl you's talking 'bout so much.

EARL. Let me explain this matter t' th' meetin'.

PERRY. You better explain it. You're li'ble t' lose your membership in this order an' git ostrich-eyes from our midst, if y' don't.

EARL. It's easy t' explain what I meant. I meant that we needed some sort uv a form uv progr'm t' go by in our meetin'. Ever lodge has one uv its own, an' we orter have one, too.

PERRY. So that's what a Rachel is. We all owe you 'n

apology fer th' false instruction we placed on your words.

BERT. I r'member hearin' my dad mention th' Rachel in th' Knights of Cold-lumber that he b'longs to, now.

FRED. Well, let's git us one too, then.

FRANK. Where'll we git one? Order it? Maybe we c'd borry one some'res.

JERRY. Why no, we'll hafta make one ourselves. We want somethin' nobody won't know nothin' about but us.

BERT. I an' th' President has already got one started. We hadn't thought uv th' name fer it, though.

PERRY. Sure, we got a purty good Rachel t' start on, I think. I'll show y'all what we've got.

PERRY *goes to the "altar," where he takes up six copies of a "song."*

FRANK. Didn't y' git no outside he'p on it? Didn't copy none outa no books?

BERT. No siree, we never. We made it all up right out uv our heads. That's what we done. Why, I reckon if we's t' try real hard, we c'd might' nigh write a book.

PERRY *passes out the sheets of paper.*

PERRY. Here, look this over, ever'body, an' see what y' think about it fer a op'nin' song.

FRED. A song?

JERRY. Did y' compose th' music fer it an' all?

BERT. No, it's th' same tune as "America," but we made up th' words to it.

EARL. It's got a fine sentyment.

FRED. It is a corker. We ought to sing it in school t'morrer. I bet Miss Sanders'd git ashamed an' treat us better, if we did.

EARL. No, not in school. If we use this as part of our Rachel, we mustn't divulge it to no human person. We're not s'posed t' reveal none uv our secret work.

FRED. That is right, I forgot about that.

BERT. Well, now, it might be a good idee t' sing this fer Miss Sanders an' th' girls in our room. It might make an impression on 'em that would be productive uv lots uv good.

PERRY. An' we c'd make up something else fer th' Rachel.

JERRY. Why, sure, an' that wouldn't be exposin' no secrets a-tall, then.

FRANK. Le's do sing it. That'd be a sort uv warnin' to 'em t' beware, an' then if they didn't take no heed to it, we c'd use 'most any kind uv a strong measure with 'em an' not have no bad conscience.

BERT. How 'bout it, Mr. President? We c'd let 'em know who made it up, too.

PERRY. I'm in favor uv singin' it t' th' school m'se'f. We'll leave it to a vote, though, an' if ever'body's in favor uv it, we'll make up somethin' else fer th' Rachel.

FRED. Le's vote.

PERRY. All in favor uv singin' this song t' th' school to-morrer, make it known by sayin' "I."

All cry "I."

PERRY. It is agreed, then, that we'll sing this song b'fore th' school.

JERRY. Miss Sanders might not let us.

FRANK. Yes, she will. She won't know what it's gonna be an' as she's allays wantin' somebody t' entertain th' room, she'll give us permission, if we ask 'er.

BERT. I b'lieve she will, too. I'll do th' askin', an' also tell who made it up.

PERRY. All right, we'll delegate you to do that.

EARL. Le's practice on it, then, so's we c'n sing it right off without no troble.

FRANK. We c'n do that b'fore we leave. But le's fix up a Rachel now.

JERRY. We need t' have a password first. Nobody hadn't mentioned that.

EARL. That's a fact. I had forgotten that.

JERRY. I know a good password.

PERRY. What is it?

JERRY [*looks about cautiously and lowers his voice*]. Raw Head an' Bloody Bones.

EARL. That's not dignifried, Jerry.

JERRY. Aw, what do we keer 'bout dignified? This ain't no Ol' Maids' Sewin' Circle, is it? Why, we are named after th' world's greatest cave man, an' I bet he never stood on 'is dignity while he wuz a laying' out them bean-eaters or pullin' that lion's jaws apart.

FRANK. That's all a fac' Jerry; but I'm like Earl. I think our password ought t' reflec' more uv th' elevated an' slacklime.

PERRY. Th' meetin' is open t' s'gestions now. Speak up if the's any more idees in th' house.

BERT. I feel like I've got th' idee that we need fer a password.

FRED. Pour out yer heart, Bert.

BERT. We ought t' figger out some way t' use th' name uv our lodge. We got a word fer each member in it an' all, so we orter make our password harmonize if we can.

FRED. Why, that's easy t' do. Let ever' member take one word uv th' lodge name an' use it as his individual password.

PERRY. That's a good s'gestion. All in favor uv that, make it known by sayin' "I."

All say "I."

BERT. But now that we've d'cided t' use th' words uv our lodge name as individual passwords, how we gonna know who'll use which word?

FRED. Number ourselves an' take th' word that corresponds t' th' number each one got.

PERRY. Another good idee, Fred. Seems like you're gittin' full uv 'em all at once.

FRANK. Seems t' me like he's emptyin' 'em out purty fast.

PERRY. Well, I'm th' President, I'll be Number One an' take Solemn an' Bert c'n be Number Two.

EARL. I been noticin' ever' since we been here you kinda give Bert th' pref'rence over th' rest uv us. How come him any better'n anybody else?

BERT. I'm gonna do somethin' fer th' order, that's why.

JERRY. All uv us is gonna do that, I reckon.

PERRY. Not like what Bert's gonna do.

EARL. Well, what is it that he's gonna do that's so great an' grand?

PERRY. You c'n tell 'em, Bert.

BERT [*proudly*]. I'm gonna bring my Gran'pa's ol' Civil War s'ord up here as part uv th' pair-o-flat-nail-heads uv th' lodge room.

PERRY. I've 'pointed him as my A. D. Camp fer it, too.

FRANK. Where d'y' git that name?

BERT. Guess y' never heard uv George Washington, did y'?

FRANK. Don't try t' kid nobody, now.

PERRY. Did you ever hear of a Frenchman named Jean Paul Ives Roshay de Marky de La Fayette?

FRED. Sure, I have.

FRANK. That wuz one uv Washington's staff generals.

PERRY. You are right.

EARL. I don't see what that has got t' do with callin' Bert what y' did.

PERRY. Well, th' Americans couldn't all pronounce La Fayette's full name very well, so Washington changed it an' just called him his A. D. Camp. So that's what Bert is t' me. Any objections to it?

FRED. Oh well, that's all fine. Why'nt y' tell us b'fore?

PERRY. It is settled, then, that I'm Number One an' Bert is Number Two. Does it make any difference to th' rest uv y' what numbers y' take?

FRANK. No. You number us.

PERRY. All right. Frank'll be Number Three, Fred Number Four, Earl Number Five an' Jerry Number Six.

JERRY. I'm last but not least.

PERRY. Now, let's say our passwords in th' rotation in which they come. "The Solemn—"

BERT. "And Serious—"

FRANK. "Sons—"

FRED. "Of Samson's—"

EARL. "Sad—"

JERRY. "Secret."

PERRY. That sounds purty good. We'll include this in th' Rachel from now on as a reglar thing.

FRED. Say, it's gittin' late. We better go home.

PERRY. Not 'till we practice our song.

EARL. I fergot that.

BERT. Le's sing it an' go. We c'n finish up th' Rachel later
or when we got more time.

PERRY. Take th' copies I give ever'body, then, an' we'll
sing.

ALL [*sing the following to the tune of America*].

As brothers we all met,
(Not one a teacher's pet)
In peace last night.
'Cause teacher's hard to please;
She whips us if we sneeze;
While girls laugh up their sleeves
At our sad plight.

We hardly think it fair,
That all the blame we bear
And girls go free.
We know we oft pursue
The things we should not do;
But girls can do wrong too,
As well as we.

The tattlers we despise
More'n anything 'neath the skies
On land or sea.
They've dealt us pain and woe
That none but we can know;
But to them soon we'll show
Some misery.

CURTAIN

THE SIX S's IN ACTION

CHARACTERS

BERT
EARL
PERRY
FRED
FRANK
JERRY

} *the original members of the Six S's*

MISS SANDERS, *their teacher*

ALICE
ELLA
VIOLET

} *alleged teacher's pets*

FERDIE, *a disliked sissy*

BOYS AND GIRLS, *other pupils*

SCENE: MISS SANDERS' *classroom*

Enter PERRY and BERT.

BERT. I b'lieve it's gonna work like a charm.

PERRY. I do too. Soon as Mr. Black sees that card an' reads what's on it, he's gonna start wond'rin' who in th' world "Miss Sanderses Committee uv Three" is.

BERT. We'll be sure t' he'p him find out when he comes in our room t' investigate, too.

PERRY. Won't we, though? Reckin we better tell th' rest uv th' Six S's what's up?

BERT. Better not tell 'em ever'thing yit. We c'n give 'em t' un'erstan' who th' Committee uv Three is, so in case any uv 'em wuz called on t' an'ser any questions, they'd know who t' desi'nate.

PERRY. That's a good idee, Bert. We c'n stay on th' safe side in that way an' hand th' girls a package o' misery at th' same time.

BERT. I wouldn't mind much t' see Ferdie Gibbons git some uv it with th' girls.

PERRY. Well, he is a-nawful sissy and a terrible nuisance; but I don't know as I'd want t' see 'im come t' grief like I do th' girls. He never causes us th' trouble that Alice Ella an' Violet cause.

BERT. Well, 'course they are th' main ones we got a grudge against, but I'm tellin' y' frankly, I ain't got no great love for Ferdie.

PERRY. Miss Sanders won't be apt t' name Ferdie on th' Committee if she thinks it's some honor, which I'm sure she will. She can't endure Ferdie sometimes, herse'f.

BERT. Mr. Black won't likely come in our room—he'll just send word by some one, as he usually does, that th' Committee uv Three is wanted in his office.

PERRY. And it will be our part t' let on like we are sure some honor is gonna be extended t' whoever it is, an' Miss Sanders 'll do th' rest.

BERT. Why, sure she will. She can't miss selecting her three pets to receive th' honors.

PERRY. They may not feel quite so honored an' exalted when they tell Mr. Black that they're th' duly delegated members uv the Committee of Three.

Enter FERDIE.

FERDIE. Good morning, boys.

PERRY. Why, good morning, Tessie—I mean Ferdie.

BERT [*extravagantly*]. How are you, my dear?

Both BERT and PERRY bow very low to FERDIE.

FERDIE [*seriously*]. I'm quite well, thank you. Do you both find yourselves in health?

BERT [*mimicking*]. Oh no, I regret to say that I do not, my dear. I am quite ill.

FERDIE. You need not call me your dear, Bert; but what seems to be your ailment?

PERRY [*catching BERT'S spirit of mischief*]. O Tess—I mean Ferdie, I am quite alarmed about him. Won't you come feel his pulse?

FERDIE. What is wrong with you, Bert?

BERT. Oh, I'm afraid I've got a pain across my misery.

FERDIE. You ought to be ashamed.

PERRY. Ain't that just too bad, Tess—I mean Ferdie?

FERDIE. Why do you keep getting my name confused so much with Tessie?

PERRY. Oh, I don't know, unless it's because you remind me so much of some one I knew by that name.

FERDIE. I don't think you boys are nice.

BERT. You don't say it, really?

FERDIE. You are both very rude and insulting.

PERRY. Oh horrors!

FERDIE. I'm going out to find the girls and play with them. They aren't rude to me like you boys.

Exit FERDIE, head high in air.

BERT [*waving*]. By-by, Ferdie!

PERRY [*blowing a kiss*]. Ta, ta, old sweet thing!

Enter EARL and FRED.

EARL. What's a matter with Sister Ferdie?

FRED. We met 'im outside an' he wouldn't even look at us, much less speak.

PERRY. I think he was suffering from a mental shock 'cause Bert told 'im 'bout havin' th' indigestion.

FRED. Well, he was certainly on a high horse about it. He had his head clear back between his shoulder blades.

PERRY. The's somethin' I want t' tell you fellers, too. [*Looks all about cautiously.*]

EARL [*waving him away*]. Gwan. We don't wanta hear what's th' matter with *you*, now. Do we, Fred?

FRED. No, I reckon I don't feel int'rested. [*Turns away as if to leave.*]

BERT [*seriously*]. But this is really somethin' important. It concerns th' Six S's.

FRED and EARL become alert at mention of the Six S's.

PERRY. Th' Lodge is gonna evidence itself an' make manifest its power, so I wanta post y'all on what t' do.

EARL [*eagerly*]. What is it?

FRED. Tell us, then.

PERRY. Well, the's li'ble t' be somethin' said or done 'bout a Committee of Three in our room this mornin' an'—

FRED [*gleefully*]. An' me'n Earl's gonna be on it?

BERT [*emphatically*]. Not on yer tintype. An' what's more, none uv th' rest uv th' Six S's is gonna be on it.

PERRY. We don't *want* to be on it. Whatever goes or comes, to the best of your knowledge, th' Committee of Three is made up of Alice, Ella and Violet.

EARL. The teacher's pets!

FRED. What's th' Committee fer?

PERRY. Don't ask too many questions, now. Just remember what I said, an' if Mr. Black should happen t' ask y' 'bout th' Committee, tell 'im th' girls' names.

BERT. Fer th' good uv th' order, it's best not t' divulge ever'thing yit.

Enter MISS SANDERS with ALICE, ELLA and VIOLET clinging to her lovingly.

ELLA. Do tell us a story, Miss Sanders.

MISS SANDERS. I don't think of any story just now that is worth telling, girls.

ALICE. Tell one you've already told, then, if you can't think of any more.

VIOLET. We'd like to hear it again.

ELLA. You tell the most interestingest stories, Miss Sanders. I just love to hear them.

MISS SANDERS. You shouldn't try to flatter me so, Ella.

ELLA. But that's the truth, Miss Sanders.

ALICE. We like to hear your stories better than those of anyone I know.

MISS SANDERS. I fear you will make me quite vain if you keep on in such a complimentary manner.

During the above conversation, the boys have withdrawn to the rear of the room, where they listen with marked disgust written upon their faces.

ALICE. Recite some poetry for us, then, Miss Sanders.

ELLA. Oh yes, do.

VIOLET. Please do, Miss Sanders. I just adore poetry. I think it is so *cute*.

At this the boys exchange glances then resort to the well known gesture of stroking the chin, then giving the hand a sling as if to rid it of something.

MISS SANDERS. Some other time, perhaps, I will.

VIOLET. Do, now, Miss Sanders, or we'll think you don't like us any more.

Enter FERDIE.

FERDIE. Do what, Violet?

VIOLET *ignores FERDIE's question.*

FERDIE. Miss Sanders, what is it they want you to do? Tell me, Miss Sanders.

MISS SANDERS. They asked me to tell a story or recite some poetry for them, but I am hardly in the mood for either, just now.

FERDIE [*enthusiastically*]. Oh, let me, then. I can. I just love to recite and tell stories.

MISS SANDERS. Why, I have no objection, Ferdie. Recite all you care to, if you like.

FERDIE [*in thoughtful attitude*]. All right, let me see. What shall I recite? Let me think of something real good.

Enter JERRY and FRANK.

JERRY. What's wrong with ice cream an' chalklit cake?

FRANK. Or how'd peanut-butter fudge suit y'r taste?

FERDIE [*haughtily*]. I was trying to think of something good to recite, and I can manage perfectly well enough without any of your suggestions.

FRANK. Oh well, we wasn't gonna charge y' nothin'.

JERRY. We named over somethin' good t' eat, 'cause we thought that was what any real boy'd have in mind when he said *real good*.

FRANK. An' if you're gonna recite, th' mention uv ice cream an' cake orter be a help to y', anyway.

FERDIE. I don't see why.

FRANK. Why, 'cause it'll make yer mouth water.

FERDIE. What's the good of that?

FRANK. To keep yer tongue from stickin' like it did that time you tried t' sing a solo at church.

FERDIE. Miss Sanders, they have tormented me so that I don't believe I can recite on account of my wits being so scattered.

JERRY. His wits has scattered, Miss Sanders. Le's send fer some cowboys t' round 'em up again.

MISS SANDERS. Don't mind, Ferdie. Go on and recite, if you can think of anything. They only meant to tease you.

VIOLET. I think they ought to be ashamed to frustrate Ferdie so.

FRANK. We never first-rated 'im. If he's first-rated, we didn't even know it.

ALICE. Oh, just because they couldn't recite, they are jealous of Ferdie.

MISS SANDERS. It does seem that some of the boys are envious of Ferdie, for some cause or other.

JERRY. *No ma'am!* He ain't got nothin' that I'd have.

BERT *beckons to JERRY and FRANK, but they disregard him.*

FRANK. An' he don't do nothin' but what I'd be ashamed t' be guilty of, so we ain't envious of *him*.

FERDIE. Miss Sanders, I can't think of a thing to recite. What would you do if you were in my shoes?

BERT. If *I* wuz in 'em, I'd point 'em to'ards th' door an' start 'em t' locomotin' in high.

ELLA. Miss Sanders, haven't you thought of something to recite or tell us, by now?

MISS SANDERS [*smiling*]. No, I haven't. I'm just a little bit afraid that my wits have scattered, too. I am worried about a phone call which I received before I left home. [*She looks at her watch.*] There is hardly time for anything of the sort, now, anyway. It is almost time for the bell to ring.

ALICE. Miss Sanders, may Violet, Ella and I go dust the erasers, before it rings?

MISS SANDERS. You wouldn't have time, girls. I want you in the room for something else, besides.

PERRY [*exasperated*]. Come here, Frank, you an' Jerry, too.

FRANK and JERRY start toward him; but a bell rings off-stage, before they reach the other group of boys. Everyone goes to a seat. The extra pupils enter at this point, and take seats, too.

ELLA. Now, Miss Sanders, what did you want with us?

MISS SANDERS. I wanted you girls, and the rest of the pupils in the room, to hear what I have to tell you from Mr. Black.

PERRY waves his hand energetically for a permission.

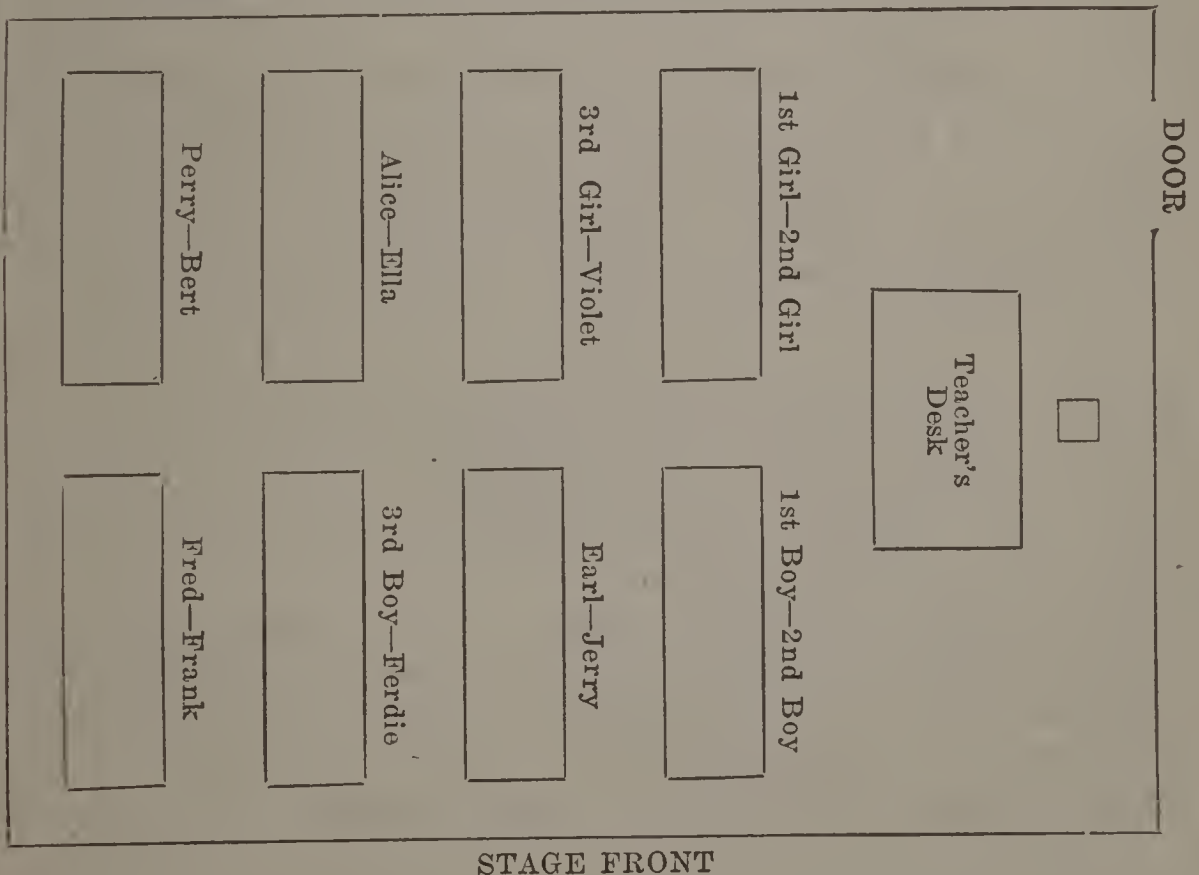
MISS SANDERS. What is it, Perry?

PERRY. C'n I speak t' Jerry?

MISS SANDERS. Is that the way you ask a permission?

PERRY. May I speak t' Jerry, then?

DIAGRAM OF STAGE AND SEATING OF PUPILS IN ROOM



MISS SANDERS. Is it so important that you can't wait until I have finished what I had started to say?

BERT. It's purty important, Miss Sanders. Please let 'im speak.

MISS SANDERS [*surprised*]. Why, how do you know, Bert?

BERT [*confused*]. Why I— er— a— I *know* it is.

MISS SANDERS. Are you a mind reader, then, that you know what Perry wishes to say to Jerry?

BERT [*more confused*]. Yes'm. No'm. But yes'm, I know what he wants to get.

PERRY [*to the rescue*]. I gotta splinter in my finger an' I wanta get my knife f'm Jerry t' pick it out.

JERRY [*surprised*]. Why, I ain't— [*PERRY signals frantically to him to say no more. JERRY stops short then finishes lamely.*] Ain't got nothin' else but th' very thing t' git that splinter out.

MISS SANDERS. But I am afraid that a knife might cause an infection, Perry. Here, I think I have a needle somewhere about my desk. [*Searches for it.*] Come, let me get the splinter with this needle.

During this time FRED, EARL and BERT pantomime vigorously to FRANK and JERRY as if trying to inform them that ALICE, ELLA and VIOLET are to be designated as the Committee of Three. They hold up three fingers and point significantly to the girls. FRANK and JERRY shake their heads in bewilderment.

PERRY. I'd ruther use my knife, Miss Sanders.

MISS SANDERS. But Perry, I'm afraid you will infect your finger by picking the splinter with your knife.

BERT. Aw, 'taint in 'is *finger*, Miss Sanders. There ain't no danger uv blood poison.

PERRY [*with a silly grin*]. Ah— er— a— did I say it was in my finger? I didn't, did I?— I wonder what's wrong with me anyhow. It ain't in my finger at all. There ain't no danger uv blood poison.

MISS SANDERS. Why do you act so strangely, Perry? Are you ill?

BERT. Aw, it's that splinter, Miss Sanders. It's makin' 'im kinda deleterious. Y' better let 'im speak t' Jerry an' get 'is knife t' get it out.

MISS SANDERS [*determinedly*]. I hardly think he needs a knife. I doubt that he really wants one.

PERRY. Yes'm, I do, too. I want—

MISS SANDERS. Perhaps we shall see. I mean to get to the bottom of this before I stop. Jerry!

JERRY [*startled*]. Yes'm.

MISS SANDERS. Do you have Perry's knife?

JERRY [*starts to shake his head, but catches a glimpse of BERT nodding vigorously and significantly*]. Yes'm, I got it.

MISS SANDERS [*quietly*]. Bring it here, then.

JERRY [*in consternation*]. Ma'am?

MISS SANDERS. I said, bring the knife to me.

JERRY sits in motionless bewilderment.

MISS SANDERS. Do you hear me, Jerry?

JERRY [*vacantly*]. Yes'm. What'd y' say?

MISS SANDERS. I said for you to bring the knife to me, if you have it.

JERRY sits as if petrified.

MISS SANDERS [*sharply*]. Will you bring me that knife, or must I be forced to come after it?

JERRY [*springing up*]. Oh, I will! You needn't come after it, Miss Sanders. [*Feels in his pockets in a frantic manner.*] But—but I ain't got it!

MISS SANDERS. You just told me that you had it.

JERRY [*alarmed*]. Yes'm. Bu-but I lost it.

While JERRY is standing and MISS SANDERS has her attention directed toward him, PERRY ostentatiously slips his knife to BERT, who passes it to FRED. FRED hands it on to FRANK, who opens it and sticks it in the toe of his shoe sole and awaits an opportunity to thrust it up to JERRY.

MISS SANDERS. Well, well, that is too bad. So you really lost it, did you, Jerry?

JERRY [*gulping*]. Yes'm, I lost it.

MISS SANDERS. Where did you lose it?

BERT. I reckon if he knowed that, he'd 'a' found it soon's he lost it.

MISS SANDERS. You keep quiet, Bert. We need none of your assistance in this matter.

EARL [*aside*]. Somebody's gonna need assistance purty soon.

MISS SANDERS *turns to BERT and FRANK sticks his foot past FERDIE and pokes the knife into JERRY'S hand.*

JERRY [*with great relief*]. Ah-h-h!

MISS SANDERS [*turning to him again*]. What is it, Jerry?

JERRY. I found the knife.

Boys all heave a sigh of relief, too.

MISS SANDERS. Really? How remarkable!

FRED. He's good at findin' things, Miss Sanders. He found a bumblebee on a buttercup one day.

MISS SANDERS. No facetiousness, now, Fred.

FRED. Well, I reckon he never took a seat on its nest!

MISS SANDERS. How did you happen to find the knife so suddenly, Jerry?

JERRY. Well, 'm I was just a-standin' there concentratin' on what I wanted to have in my hand more than anything else in the world, when all at once I felt somethin' an' it was th' knife.

MISS SANDERS. An altogether remarkable happening and a very fortunate one for you, too, young man.

FRANK. He was born lucky, wasn't he, Miss Sanders?

MISS SANDERS. It would seem so. I thought I had him trapped in a lie; but circumstances which I do not quite understand have vindicated him for the time being. Be seated, Jerry. I may yet get to the bottom of this performance.

JERRY *sits, willingly enough. The boys exchange glances of uneasiness.*

MISS SANDERS. Perry.

PERRY [*squirming*]. Yes'm.

MISS SANDERS. Did you not say that you wanted your knife to get out a splinter?

PERRY [*confused*]. No, ma'am, I did *not say it*, that is, I mean I did say I did.

MISS SANDERS. You wanted to get out a splinter?

PERRY. Oh, yes'm.

MISS SANDERS. And nothing would do but your knife?

PERRY [*in doubt*]. Well, I believe I said that I'd rather have my knife than a needle.

MISS SANDERS [*relentlessly*]. You didn't want a needle, then, which is considerably more convenient and altogether more free from the possibility of infection?

PERRY. Let it go, Miss Sanders. I don't b'lieve I need either one uv 'em.

MISS SANDERS. But I mean to get to the bottom of this before I let it go. Now, however, on one condition, I might—

PERRY [*eagerly interrupting*]. What's that?

MISS SANDERS. If you really and truly wanted to get out a splinter—

PERRY. It's out, now, Miss Sanders.

MISS SANDERS. Another remarkable occurrence! How did you get it out?

PERRY. Oh— a— it— a— just came out.

MISS SANDERS. Now see here, Perry, I was just ready to ask you in what part of your anatomy a splinter could lodge that it would allow no chance of blood poisoning—

PERRY [*mopping his brow*]. Miss Sanders, I b'lieve I'm gonna swoon.

MISS SANDERS. I shouldn't wonder that you did. First, you have a splinter that won't infect and then it comes out without being picked.

PERRY [*becoming composed again*]. Yes'm, it *wouldn't* and it *did*.

MISS SANDERS. Just please tell me where it was then and I shall believe all you say and grant all you ask.

PERRY. You don't think I could have a splinter stuck some'rs, then, that wouldn't cause inflection and could come out without bein' picked?

MISS SANDERS. Frankly, I don't. Tell me where it was.

PERRY [*triumphantly*]. In my teeth!

MISS SANDERS. I hadn't thought of that.

EARL. Thought you had him trapped, though, didn't you, Miss Sanders?

MISS SANDERS. I really did. And somehow I don't yet feel that I plumbed the depths of your intentions, Perry. It seems that Jerry narrowly escaped entangling himself, too. But since I have no visible proof of anything wrong, I shall allow the permission you asked, Perry.

PERRY [*with alacrity*]. Thank y', ma'am.

PERRY *goes to JERRY and gets his knife, whispering a few words as he does so.*

FERDIE. Now, tell us what you started to tell about what Mr. Black said, Miss Sanders.

PERRY *resumes his seat.*

MISS SANDERS. After so long a time I shall try to do so. Mr. Black called me on the telephone last night.

ALICE [*giggling*]. Oh, did you give him one?

MISS SANDERS [*innocently*]. One what?

ALICE. Why, a date, of course. What else would he call for?

MISS SANDERS. Don't be silly, Alice. He called to tell me to send my Committee of Three to his room immediately upon the ringing of the last bell.

VIOLET. Your Committee of Three?

MISS SANDERS. So he said. And I didn't even know that I had such a committee.

FRED. Maybe it's some kind of a contest to be between the different rooms.

FERDIE. That's just about it.

MISS SANDERS. I had almost come to that conclusion, too. In fact, I have already made a mental selection of those whom I shall send.

ALICE. Am I one of them?

MISS SANDERS. Well, I had thought that the boys—

BERT [*interrupting hastily*]. But we ain't never much good at contests an' such like, you know. I think th' girls 'd do better'n us. That is, some uv 'em would.

MISS SANDERS. That is just what I was going to remark, Bert. I had thought of sending—

FERDIE. Send *me*, Miss Sanders. I'm good at things like that. I am real proficient.

PERRY [*in an undertone*]. Y' better keep yer mouth shut or y' may wish y' hadn't done no fishin'.

MISS SANDERS. What is that you say, Perry?

PERRY. Nothin'.

MISS SANDERS. I am sure that I saw your lips moving though, Perry. Now say it again.

PERRY. Oh, I— er— a— I never said anything.

ELLA. I saw his lips move, too, Miss Sanders.

VIOLET. And so did I.

ALICE. I saw him work his lips, too.

PERRY. Oh, I was— just a-spittin' out another piece uv splinter from between my teeth.

MISS SANDERS. Well, as I was saying, I have selected Alice, Ella and Violet as the Committee of Three to represent this room in Mr. Black's office. I hope that you girls will bear up well and bravely under whatever is laid upon you.

ALICE. Oh goody, goody!

ELLA. Gee, I'm glad!

VIOLET. And so am I!

MISS SANDERS. Now, I don't want the boys to feel hurt over this.

PERRY. Oh, don't worry about us this time. *We* won't.

BERT. If there's anybody *hurt* over it, you won't blame *us* for it, either, will you, Miss Sanders?

MISS SANDERS. No, I shall have to admit that you have all acted quite nobly on this occasion, so far as I can see.

ALICE. When do we go, Miss Sanders?

MISS SANDERS. At once, girls, and may good fortune be yours.

ALICE, ELLA *and* VIOLET *go out together highly pleased.*

MISS SANDERS. Now, I shall go get some crayon and we will begin the morning recitations.

Exit MISS SANDERS.

PERRY. Hurrah! Boys, Hurrah! Yesterday evening *some one* rubbed Mr. Black's desk with garlic and left a bouquet of skunk cabbage in his inkwell with a note which read, "With the compliments of The Committee of Three from Miss Sanders' Room."

BERT. An' th' minit them girls open th' door uv his office an' announces theirse'ves as th' Committee of Three, Mr. Black's gonna start t' thrashin' on 'em.

JERRY. So that's what it was all about?

FRANK. We've got down t' th' *Sad* part uv th' Six S's organization, then, an' it's our enemies that's gonna be sad.

CURTAIN

THE SIX S's ADMIT FERDIE

CHARACTERS

PERRY, *president and founder of the order*

BERT, *his A. D. Camp (aide de camp)*

EARL

FRED

FRANK

JERRY

} *charter members of the organization*

FERDIE, *the despised sissy who discovers the meeting place of the order and is admitted to membership in order to insure his silence.*

SCENE: *The hayloft of a barn. Hay, sacks of feed, bits of rope, harness, and other odds and ends are strewn about. With some of the hay or sacks of feed, a raised dais or seat of honor is made for PERRY. BERT occupies a place slightly less prominent.*

Discovered: *All of the above named characters save FERDIE, seated upon the improvised seats. They breathe heavily as if having just been engaged in a struggle.*

PERRY. Well, there's just this much to it an' there ain't no if's nor an's nor but's nor maybe's about it. Somethin's got t' be done an' that purty presently, too.

BERT. Yeah, our order is now hangin, on th' precip'tous brink uv a deep an' dark spasm. Somethin's gotta be done t' divert th' impendin' disaster, or we'd just as well disband our lodge an' go play dolls with th' girls.

EARL. How d'y' reckon' that milksop ever found out what we was doin' an' where we was at, anyway?

FRED. Oh, he's purty smooth, when it comes t' findin' out things. I actually think that he's th' only one in th' room that had th' faintest glimmer uv an idee that we had anything t' do with th' Committee uv Three gittin' such a promisc'ous frailin'.

FRANK. That's right. His eyes are sharp as needle points an' his ears as long as a hound's tongue. He don't miss no word nor action that happens in his locality.

JERRY [*examines his wrist*]. Well, he's some fighter, too, I c'n tell th' pop-eyed populace. He bit an' scratched me worse'n a she-male tiger. Looka there where he bit me. [*Shows his wrist to others.*]

FRED. That looks bad, Jerry. You'd better do somethin' fer that, I b'lieve.

JERRY. I think I *will* do somethin' fer it. Think I'll go right down an' sock Mr. Ferdie another'n in the' jaw fer it.

PERRY. No, now that he's got quiet, don't disturb him, till we d'eide what t' do with 'im.

EARL. I bet that by th' time he gits out uv that oat sack an' gits his mouth so's he c'n shut it again, he won't keer nothin' about sneakin' up no more ladders on people that's holdin' secret meetin's.

FRANK. Maybe we oughtn't t' crammed such a *big* cob in 'is mouth an' tied it there. It'd maybe give 'im lockjaw t' have his mouth bleared open so wide.

BERT [*heartlessly*]. Let it give it to 'im. He had no business t' come sneakin' aroun' where he wasn't wanted, like he did.

JERRY. Maybe when he does git his mouth shut again, he'll know t' 'preciate keepin' it shut, 'stead uv shootin' off his bazoo so much about what all he knows.

FRED. If he'd actually take th' lockjaw, he couldn't tell nothin' he seen nor heard, nor what was done to 'im while he was in our midst.

PERRY [*emphatically*]. Yes, he'll tell, too. Don't you ever doubt that fer one minit. He'd tell it when he got loose, if he had t' write it or make signs t' git it out uv his system. That's th' reason we've got t' think uv some plan t' handle 'im b'fore he goes out uv here.

EARL. Well, fer my part, I wish we didn't never have t' let 'im go out.

BERT. Well, fellers, I have been thinkin' th' matter over very seriously—

JERRY [*fervently*]. An' so's th' rest uv us.

BERT. An' there ain't but one thing t' do t' keep Ferdie f'm exposin' us an' our secrets t' a waitin' an' curious outside world.

FRANK. What's the idee, Bert?

BERT. It's gonna be a unpleasant pill t' put down our parliamentary canal; but it's gonna hafta be swallowed.

FRED. What is it, Bert?

BERT. We're gonna hafta take Ferdie in as a member uv our Solemn and Serious Sons of Samson's Sad Secret.

FRANK. Never!

JERRY. Impossible!

FRANK. That'll never do. He don't qualify in any respect fer th' sanctimonious honors which you have su'gested t' extend.

FRED. That might work, though.

JERRY. I'd ruther not have no lodge as t' endure his smart-Alecky presence in our meetin's.

PERRY. There's such a thing as endurin' a lesser evil, though, in order t' avoid a greater one.

JERRY. I think you put it back'ards, though, Perry. Havin' him in our midst 'd be th' greatest evil that I c'n think uv happenin'.

PERRY. It'd be a-nawful nuisance, t' have t' put up with 'im, I'll admit; but this is th' time when we've come t' a cry seas. We're gonna give up somethin', we know. We better submit t' some displeasent features than t' disband entirely.

EARL. That's a fac', Perry. An' we all know that Ferdie is a reg'lar Sir Gal's hat fer honor, if he accepts anything as a trust. Once we got 'im t' promise silence an' secrecy, if we let 'im join, he'd never squawk.

FRANK. Yeah, ever'body knows that he's th' soul uv honor; but what'd we do with 'im? I mean, what part would we let him play in th' meetin's?

FRED. Well, I c'n think uv one good use we c'd put 'im to.

EARL. What's that, Fred?

FRED. We c'd make 'im furnish our air rifles with plenty uv pills out uv his dad's drug store.

PERRY. Well, as th' President an' founder uv The Solemn and Serious Sons of Samson's Sad Secret, I'm gonna declare that in view uv th' cryin' seas facin' us, it has become necessary as a 'mergency measure t' admit Ferdie Gibbons to th' membership an' priv'leges uv our order, without further delay or argument.

JERRY. He might not *want* to join us.

BERT. Oh yes, he'll want t' join all right. If he wasn't dyin' t' git in, how come 'im t' be snoopin' around tryin' t' find us?

JERRY. Since it does seem th' best thing t' do, I reckon we c'd use "ways an' means" t' make 'im join.

EARL. I'm in favor uv havin' 'im join.

PERRY. I tell you it's a 'mergency measure, an' we're gonna hafta like it, whether we want to or not.

FRANK. Or make out like we like it like it is, whether we like it like it is or not.

PERRY. I'm gonna ask Earl an' my A. D. Camp t' go fetch up th' victim.

EARL and BERT rise and go out at left. At the exit they turn backward and crouch, then go out of sight as if descending a ladder.

JERRY [*calling after EARL and BERT*]. Watch out fer bites an' scratches!

FRED. Now there's one thing we want t' remember t' do. When we git 'im up here, we want t' 'niti-ate 'im good an' proper, so's he'll re'lize he's joined somethin'.

JERRY. Oh, I'll try t' see t' that, if nobody else does.
[*Caresses his injured wrist.*]

FRANK. Have we got anything in our Rachel 'bout 'niti-atin' folks?

PERRY. No, not so far. Y' see th' intention uv our lodge in th' beginnin' was t' make it a closed body an' not take in no more; but since we've modified th' rules, we'll hafta do some Em-prompt-you 'nitiatin'.

FRED. Our lodge was supposed t' die out when we died, wasn't it? Like that club uv old war vet'rans somewhere that Pa read about.

JERRY. I read that, too. Them old vet'rans, though, they had a woman in their number, an' whichever one that outlived all th' others was t' git th' woman. I think her name was Polly Rogers an' they called 'er Pol fer short.

PERRY. Oh! *Pol Roger!* Why, that's th' name uv a wine or champagne that gives y' a sham pain in th' head. Y' don't call Pol Roger a woman, do y'?

JERRY. Oh, well, it 'mounts t' 'bout th' same thing, I reckon. They are both somethin' that ain't good fer men t' over-indulge in, but also somethin' that it's hard fer some t' keep away from.

FRANK [*holds up finger*]. Listen! They've took th' cob out uv Ferdie's mouth down there. I hear 'im exercisin' his jawbone at 'em good an' proper.

FRED. He didn't seem t' develop any symptoms uv th' lockjaw whatever, did he?

FRANK. I guess not. Just listen to that language, will you. My, but he's hot under th' collar!

JERRY. Well, who'd ever thought that little mamma's darlin'd be capable uv such cussin'?

PERRY. I guess they must be havin' a hard time gittin' his han's an' feet untied, though. That wire was purty stiff.

FRANK. I b'lieve they've got 'im unwrapped, now. I hear Bert tellin' Earl t' hold 'im tight, an' not let 'im git away.

FRED. Lissen t' that, would y'? Says he don't wanna join brotherhood with no such band uv rough necks an' cut throats as we are.

PERRY. Yeah, but he's just poppin' off now. He'll come on up as willin'ly as a trained seal in a minit. Watch what I tell y'.

FRANK. Yeah, I hear 'im bendin' in now.

JERRY. They're startin' up th' ladder. We'd orter be masked, oughtn't we?

PERRY. Tie your handkerchiefs over your face.

They quickly produce handkerchiefs and tie them across the lower part of their faces.

FRANK. I'll go tell Bert and Earl t' mask theirse'ves, too, before they come into the light.

PERRY. All right, do.

FRANK [*going to exit*]. Hey, fellers, cover yer faces before y' come on up.

Enter FERDIE, in the manner of one who has just ascended a ladder. BERT and EARL follow.

FERDIE [*looking about in surprise*]. Why, you boys have everything arranged rather nicely.

PERRY. Sure, we have. This is our lodge room.

FERDIE. I knew when you sung that song in school, that you six had something unusual on foot.

BERT. Yeah, I guess it is unusual; but it ain't on foot. It's *overhead*. Don't you remember comin' up that ladder?

FERDIE. Of course I do. Felt it, too, when Jerry and I fell down in our struggle.

JERRY. Do you remember nearly bitin' a piece outa my wrist? What do 'y think I'm gonna do fer y' about it?

FERDIE. Oh, you won't do anything.

JERRY. Oh, I won't, will I? [*Advances menacingly.*] Well, we'll just see about that.

FERDIE [*stopping him with a gesture*]. No, no, you won't do anything rash now. Bert says that I have been favorably passed upon as a candidate for membership in your organization, so you surely wouldn't mistreat a fellow member and brother.

PERRY. Well, we decided to let you join on certain conditions an' stipulations. Seemed like you was determined t' snoop aroun' an' spy on us, so we thought, bein' as you was so anxious about what we was doin', we'd make an exception to our rules an' admit you.

FERDIE. Thank you. I shall seriously consider your invitation and notify you of my decision relative to it, at some early date.

EARL. Say, young feller, don't try t' git catnip with us, now. This ain't no vaudeville comedy business, an' you may find out that it ain't, t' yer sorrow.

FRED. It ain't no invitation you're gettin', neither. It's a dispensation.

FRANK. You better make it snappy an' a'cept th' proposi-

tion that's offered by unusual opportunity, b'fore some-thin' happens t' you in th' shape uv a unusual calamity.

JERRY. Opportunity knocks but once an' so does calamity; but calamity knocks so much harder.

BERT. Yeah, 'specially th' calamity that's in store fer them that incurs th' displeasure uv our lodge. So, while yer contemplatin' a spurnin' uv th' honor that we've offered, you might also be drawin' a picture uv a unknown corpse, tied up in a oat sack, bein' fished out uv th' river some'rs down th' line.

PERRY. You are now in the grasp uv a desp'rate band. When you trespassed on our premises in th' first place, you took your life in your hands.

FRED. No human person 'sides our members has ever crossed our threshold an' lived t' tell uv what they saw t' th' waitin' worl' outside.

FRANK. We have spared your life so far on account uv you bein' in our room at school. We figgered that perhaps you intruded an' trespassed on our sacred an' secret meetin' place through ignorance uv th' consequences that might follow.

JERRY. If you blin'ly an' stupidly spurn th' chance t' save yourse'f by joinin' us, your blood'll be on your own head—not ours.

PERRY. Is there anything that you'd like to say?

FERDIE [*frightened*]. Wh-what do you wa-want me to do?

PERRY. What do you want to do?

FERDIE. I d-don't know.

EARL. Your fate is in your own hands.

FERDIE. I d-don't want to be found in an oat sack.

EARL. That's just th' words that nigger said, ain't it, fellers?

BERT. Yeah, he begged an' plead piteously; but we had no way t' spare his life, 'cause we *couldn't* allow a nigger t' become a member.

FRED. You see, he wasn't as lucky as you are. He didn't even have a chance t' save his life. He met death that was inexorable.

FERDIE. But I'm afraid Mamma won't like it, if I join

your order. She thinks you boys are entirely too rough.
FRANK. What d' you reckon she'd think about an oat sack all drippin' an' heavy?

FERDIE. Ugh! Don't mention that any more, please. I'll join. I'll be only too glad to join.

PERRY. Well, I don't know so much about that, now. You waited a long time to decide.

FERDIE [*anxiously*]. But you said I could join.

JERRY. Y' oughtn't t' waited so long 'bout makin' up your mind on th' subject.

EARL. Whyn't you take th' chance at first?

FERDIE. I was afraid that Mamma would be angry and offended if I joined without her knowledge. But give me another chance. I'll be a good and faithful member and adhere strictly to all your rules and regulations. Please give me another chance.

PERRY. Do you think you're worth it?

FERDIE. Yes, I do. And Mamma would miss me *so* much.

BERT. Le's take 'im in on probation then, fellers. If he observes th' mandrakes an' principles uv our lodge, we c'n spare his life permanently, an' if he don't—

FRED. Th' oat sack'll be waitin' for 'im at any moment's notice uv faithlessness.

FERDIE. Oh, I'll do anything that I'm told to do.

PERRY. An' you'll keep sacred an' in-violin-able all th' secret work uv this order?

FERDIE [*fervently*]. I sure will.

PERRY. Well, I'll let th' body uv members vote on it. All in favor uv admittin' Ferdie t' membership, say "I."

All say "I."

PERRY. By your votes you have chosen t' unite th' weal an' th' woe uv The Solemn and Serious Sons of Samson's Sad Secret with th' faithfulness of faithlessness uv Ferdie Gibbons.

FERDIE. I'll be faithful, boys.

PERRY. Mr. A. D. Camp, you may now conduc' th' candidate for membership t' th' altar.

BERT *leads FERDIE to the improvised altar of hay and sacks covered with a cloth. From beneath the cloth of the altar, PERRY draws a shining sword. The others move nearer.*

FERDIE [*nervously looking at the sword*]. Wh-what's that sword for?

EARL. That's what we use in our Sarah Mooneys.

FRANK. As Sir Walter Jolly said, Ferdie, "It's sharp medicine, but it cures all diseases."

FERDIE. B-but I'm not diseased, though.

BERT. You will now hafta kneel, Mr. Can'idate, an' cut out th' gab.

FERDIE *kneels on a piece of sack or matting which has been placed before the "altar."*

FRED. Better blin'fold 'im, Bert.

BERT *produces a kerchief and blindfolds FERDIE.*

FERDIE. Wh-what's all this for?

PERRY. You are gittin' ready now fer th' rights uv decapitation into our lodge.

JERRY. Any last remarks y' wanta make or messages y' wanta send?

FERDIE. T-tell Mamma what became of me.

PERRY [*in grandiloquent tones*]. Hear! Oh, hear! Into th' midst of this chapter of The Solemn and Serious Sons of Samson's Sad Secret, now comes a stranger out of darkness, seekin' th' light of fellowship an' membership. He has knocked on our portals an' hearin' his cry we are now about t' answer with admittance. O Stranger, bow low! Bow low in multiplication for what you are about to receive!

FERDIE *bows head almost to the floor, shielding the back of his neck with one hand. PERRY goes to the side of FERDIE and raises the sword.*

EARL. Let me wield the sword, Mr. President.

PERRY. No, no, I c'n use it all right.

FERDIE. Y-you're not going to hurt me, are you, boys?

BERT. Oh, no, it won't hurt, Ferdie. You'll scarcely know it.

PERRY. Please be real still now, Seeker of the Light, an' th' light shall appear.

PERRY deals FERDIE's exposed part a sounding whack with the flat side of the sword. FERDIE tumbles over.

FERDIE. Oh, my goodness!

FRED. Th' light lit heavy, didn't it?

BERT. Back on yer knees there, Can'idate.

FERDIE resumes his position upon the mat.

EARL. There's more t' come yit.

FERDIE. Please don't hit me like that again.

BERT. All right. That is sufficient application uv th' light. I'll give you th' secon' degree, now, though.

FERDIE. Please don't be so rough.

BERT. Oh, I won't be rough. This time I want you to remain on your knees; but hold up your head.

FERDIE. Please don't throw water in my face.

BERT. Don't worry. We don't aim to do that.

JERRY. That might put out th' light th' President just lit fer you.

BERT. Now clasp your hands before your face as if in prayer.

FERDIE [*obeying*]. Now don't make a mockery.

EARL. We're not mockin' birds, Ferdie.

JERRY. This is gonna be serious, Ferdie.

FERDIE. I hope it isn't painful.

BERT. Not in the least. You are to repeat what I say verb-at-'em.

FERDIE. I'm ready.

BERT. All right. Say: "A man of small wisdom is easily puffed up."

FERDIE. "A man of small wisdom is easily puffed up."

BERT. But "Pride goeth before a fall."

FERDIE. "Pride goeth before a fall."

BERT catches the end of the mat behind FERDIE.

BERT. Now what did I say come after "pride"?

FERDIE. Why, a fall.

BERT *jerks on the mat, thus throwing FERDIE forward on his face.*

FRED. Come here, Ferdie, an' lemme he'p y' up.

FERDIE [*tears off the blindfold*]. That could have been dangerous then.

FRANK. Oh, you'll live over that, Ferdie. Now I will tell you th' keyword t' Samson's success in killin' Filled-streams.

FERDIE. Oh, I want to hear that.

FRANK. Lean your head over here, then.

FERDIE *does as he is told and FRANK shouts shrilly in his ear.*

FRANK. Whoo-o-o-oo!

FERDIE *springs away from FRANK, shaking his head and rubbing his ear.*

FERDIE. You nearly bursted my eardrum, then.

FRANK. Oh well, just so's it'll still beat is all right.

JERRY. Le's give 'im th' password now an' call 'im a full-fledged member. I don't see no use t' persecute 'im so long, even if he did nearly bite a plug outa my wrist.

FRED. But what'll we give 'im fer a password? We ain't got but six words for th' Six S's an' they're all done took.

EARL. An' we don't want t' change th' name uv our lodge on his account, by addin' to or takin' from.

PERRY. No, we don't want t' do anything like that. But if you remember, there is three little connecting words in th' title of our lodge.

BERT. Why sure, *The, And* an' *Of*. We c'n let 'im have all three of them an' say 'em at th' proper time in th' Rachel.

FERDIE. You will have to explain a little more of what is expected of me.

PERRY. Well, you see we call ourselves the Six S's because our lodge has six members an' six words in its name.

FERDIE. Yes, I know that. The Solemn and Serious Sons of Samson's Sad Secret, is the name, isn't it?

PERRY. Right y' are. An' for passwords we each one took one of th' principal words of th' lodge name.

FRED. You see we numbered, Ferdie, an' number one took Solemn, for a password, an' number two, which is Bert, took Serious, an' so on an' at celery.

FRANK. An' we repeated our passwords in rotation so that it all went together an' made our complete lodge name.

EARL. So now, you're s'posed t' fill in th' gaps between th' main words with *The*, *And* an' *Of* at th' proper time.

FERDIE. I believe I understand what is expected of me, now. I don't get an S to myself?

PERRY. Say, I b'lieve I'd rather add another S onto our lodge name an' let Ferdie have it than t' give him three words't our one.

BERT. An' so had I. But what'll we give him?

JERRY. That's easy. Just call our order The Solemn and Serious Sons of Samson's Sad and Secret Sorrow, an' let Ferdie have th' last word, Sorrow. He's the last member, so he gets th' last word.

PERRY. You're a wonder, Jerry. We'll do that very thing. Ferdie, you'll be th' seventh S, an' your password is *Sorrow*.

EARL. Do you understand how it is given?

FERDIE. I believe I do.

FRANK. Let's have a speech from th' new member.

EARL. Yeah, le's do.

FRED. Speech, speech, Ferdie!

PERRY. Go ahead, Ferdie. You are good at things like that. Make us a speech tellin' how you like th' lodge.

FERDIE [*clearing his throat*]. Well, then, fellow members and brothers, it is with pride mixed with pleasure that I stand before you as newly made member of your organization. I might add, that, together with pride and pleasure, I still experience the sensation of what Perry was pleased to call *delight*. [*Feels gingerly of the spot struck by the sword.*]

The boys applaud.

FERDIE [*continuing*]. Now, brothers and fellow criminals, I am going to compare this splendid secret organization of ours with a mighty express train. I think that all can easily see the similitude and aptness of the comparison. The Express possesses great strength and power as it rushes through the darkness, bringing light and service to waiting mankind. And so does our lodge. Here we have Perry. He is the engine, the driving power, the leader, the headlight. Didn't he bestow upon me light, when I was in darkness?

Boys all laugh.

JERRY. Fine, fine, Ferdie!

BERT. Go on, Ferdie. You're a real orator.

FRED. Give us more! Give us more!

FERDIE [*continuing*]. And then we come to Bert. We might as well come to him for he'll come to us if we don't. He came to me when I wasn't looking for him. Now Bert represents "The Baggage Coach Ahead." You've all heard that sad song about "The Baggage Coach Ahead." Well, that's Bert.

The boys utter cries of delight and appreciation.

FERDIE. Then we have here Earl, Frank, Jerry and Fred, who are also coaches on this train. I'm not sure, but I believe the whistle, or what corresponds to the whistle, is reposed in Frank. He is an ear-splitter. These four coaches are quite useful carriers, too. Just look at Jerry. He's carrying a red spot on his wrist right now.

The boys laugh and nudge JERRY.

EARL. What about yourse'f? What part do you play?

FRANK. Yeah, tell us what *you* are.

FERDIE. Oh, I am only a little modest and insignificant caboose which has only recently been picked up and added onto the rear of this mighty train.

Applause from the boys and a quick

CURTAIN

LEMUEL WOULDN'T LIE

CHARACTERS

LEM, *who wouldn't lie*

SIS, *who tried to trap him*

MA, *who defended him*

PA, *cross-questioned him.*

SCENE: *Living-room of a modern home.*

Discovered: MA, PA and SIS seated about table. MA and SIS are engaged with needlework and magazine respectively. PA looks at his watch from time to time.

PA. Seems to me that it is about time for that boy to be getting back here. He's been gone long enough to have made the trip twice.

MA. Now, just keep cool, Pa; there's no need to be unreasonable. You know that Lemuel will be back as soon as he can manage to get here.

SIS. Of course you always stick up for him, Ma. Now, if I stayed away on an errand as long as he does, I'd be sure to get a good tongue lashing.

MA. Why are you so jealous of your brother? You and Pa both seem to have a pick at Lemmy just because he looks like me.

PA. I don't know so much about having a pick at him, don't think I have any pick; but I do know that if he was in reach of me right now, I'd take a kick at 'im.

MA. I would talk about abusing a child, if I were you. Just because you are larger and stronger than he is, you think you'll show your brute nature.

PA. If you don't stop upholding that boy in his deviltry and idleness, he won't be worth the powder and lead it'd take to blow his hat off.

MA. Are you a slave driver? What do you expect from a mere child? Do you want him to take a job somewhere and support you? He is too young to work and I don't

want him to work, anyway. He has the soul of a poet and I don't want him to be forced to do anything which conflicts with his inner urge.

SIS. Inner urge or no urge at all—teacher said if he didn't prepare better lessons than he's been in the habit of doing, she'd put him back.

MA. I don't see why people can't appreciate the tender and sympathetic nature Lemuel has, and not expect him to measure with the common herd in things he dislikes.

PA [*looks at watch again*]. If he's not here in two more minutes, I'm gonna go after him an' I bet I give him something he'll remember a long time, whether he likes it or not.

SIS [*eagerly*]. Why don't you, Pa? You came after *me* one night when I stayed too late at Evelyn's party.

Enter LEM at Right.

LEM. Here's your paper, Dad. [*Hands newspaper to his father.*]

MA. See there! I told you that Lemuel would return as soon as possible. Now you ought to be ashamed of the way you acted about it.

PA. I was not uneasy any of the time but that he would be in before breakfast; I wanted to read the paper to-night.

SIS. He has been gone even up to an hour and a half. I have kept watch on the time.

PA [*sternly*]. Young man, I was just about ready to start after you.

LEM. I wasn't lost, Dad. I didn't need any help to get home.

PA. You surely lacked something which kept you from getting back as you should have done. Where have you been all this time?

LEM. I been after your paper.

SIS. And where else in the meantime?

LEM. Ah! What is it to you?

MA. Is this a repetition of the Inquisition? Why is it necessary to conduct such a rigid cross-examination, now that Lemuel is here and you have your paper?

PA. I want to know where on earth he has frittered away all of his time.

MA. Well, I know Lemuel won't lie about it, even if he is misunderstood and his motives are unappreciated. But it is the sad fortune of all true genius to be misrated by the common herd.

LEM. Aw, ever' time I foller th' inclinations uv one o' my inner urges, I git raked over th' coals of prescription fer it good an' proper.

MA. Prosecution, Lemuel, not that other word. And where did you acquire all of those horrid expressions?

LEM. Mother, I am deeply sorry for having offended your delicate ears with such language. I was driven to forget myself momentarily by the annoying remarks of Sis and Dad.

MA. Now, isn't that just too manly of him to make such an open and frank confession of his fault to me?

SIS. Maybe you would better ask him where he has been to learn all of that language. I'm sure he didn't learn it in a public library or art gallery.

PA. Sounds to me more like he might have picked it up while loafing around some pool hall.

MA. I said it and I repeat it: Lemuel won't lie. Tell us where you have been, son. Mother, at least, will try to understand your motives.

LEM. Dad and Sis won't, though. They'll rave and rant about it.

PA. If you don't mend some of your ways, my lad, I'm going to do worse than that to you.

LEM. See there, Mother. There is a prejudice against me. If I told where I spent my time, a false construction would be placed on it, I know.

MA. Suppose, then, you explain your motives beforehand; that will perhaps induce an appreciative sentiment in even the most unappreciative.

PA. I want to know why you ask me for so much spending money before you finish, too.

LEM. Can't you see, Mother? I am condemned at the start.

SIS. A guilty conscience needs no accuser.

MA. Mother will take your part. She has an understanding nature and a sympathetic heart, if no one else in the family has.

PA. Go ahead, then, Lem, and explain your motives first. It might be possible that some one could understand them, if they were really worthy. Why did you linger in town so long?

LEM. Well, I always try to look at both sides of anything always.

MA. How noble!

LEM. And I feel like I can learn something from the most lowly or debased person on earth.

MA. What a splendid sentiment of charity!

SIS. I am not allowed to associate with the dregs and trash.

PA [*sarcastically*]. You haven't the inner urge of poetical feelings.

LEM. I also believe in each half of the world knowing how the other half lives.

MA. Another splendid thought!

PA. I don't know how on earth *you'll live* when you get grown, if you don't mend your ways before long. But it is admitted that the ideas you have advanced are worthy of consideration by anyone. Now, what are you using them to justify yourself in?

LEM. Well, sir, in order that I might better put my lofty ideas into practice and make some observations of my own upon life as it is lived in the gutter as well as on the parapets—

MA. How poetical he is!

LEM [*continuing*]. I stopped in at Mike's Billiard Parlor.

PA [*rising in baffled anger*]. Bah! That's what becomes of all the dimes and quarters I give you. My son is a pool-hall loafer and his mother won't let me correct him because she thinks he is a poet. [*Strides out of the room in high disgust.*]

LEM. Now, see there! I knew Dad would misconstrue my actions.

SIS. Some day he is going to lose his temper and strew the pieces of you all over the place.

Exit SIS in disgust, too.

SIS [*at the door*]. I can't even go to a movie if the title sounds suggestive; but Lem equalizes and associates with guttersnipes and Ma calls it art.

MA *puts her arm around LEMUEL and strokes his hair.*

MA. Never mind, Lemuel. Some day your life and works may be accepted and appreciated.

LEM [*wrenching loose*]. Lemme go, Ma; I think I hear Speck Doolin whistlin' fer me. I told 'im I'd meet 'im in five minutes.

LEMUEL runs out.

MA. The dear boy! He can even assume their language and manners. Some day, I know he will write an epic of underworld life.

CURTAIN

THE HEROES OF THE HAUNTED HOUSE

CHARACTERS

JOE
IKE

PAT
RED

SAM
TED

JUD
NIP

SCENE: *The attic of an old house. Barrels, boxes, trunks, broken chairs, brooms, etc., scattered about.*

Discovered: All of the boys seated on various articles.

PAT. Gosh, but it's rainin'.

JOE. Rainin'? I reckon it is rainin'. Why, man, at this rate, it won't be long till th' creeks is all outa banks.

IKE. Let 'er rain. We're in th' dry.

RED. 'S a good thing we got in this ole house when we did, though. We wouldn't 'a' been dry long if we'd stayed on th' playgroun'.

SAM. We wouldn't, for a fact. You c'n bet we left just in time t' keep from gittin' *soaked*. Wet wouldn't begin to describe what we'd 'a' been.

JUD. It shore broke up our doogie game plenty quick.

NIP. I never got more'n ha'f o' my doogies, neither.

SAM. Well, all th' doogies left on th' doogie groun' might as well be kissed good by now. They won't never be seen no more.

NIP. I ain't so sure that I left any on th' groun'. In fact, I'm purty sure I didn't.

TED. Aw, you're allays bellerin' 'bout somethin'. Why don't you go stick y'r head in a hole an' shut up?

NIP. Why don't you drink some of your own soup, if you think it's so good? I guess I got a right to tell about it if I lose somethin'.

JUD. Y' just said y' didn't think y' left any on th' groun', didn't y'?

TED. Why don't y' count what y've got an' see if any's missin' before y' howl so much?

NIP. Oh, I know I'm minus some marbles, but I don't expect t' ever find 'em.

RED. Well, fer th' love o' Mike, stop insinuatins' 'roun' so much, an' come out an' say who y' think got 'em.

JOE. That's what I say. Speak up, if y've got anything t' say, an' quit beatin' 'roun' th' bush so much.

NIP. Well, now, if y' all wanta know just what I think, I ain't a bit skeered t' tell y'. Of course it won't do me no good, fer I don't know who it wuz; but somebody in this gang got more doogies than belonged to 'em.

IKE. Aw, well, that's nothin' so much t' beller about. Y' better be glad y' got as many as y' did an' kep' dry.

SAM. Aw, he allays wants t' start a fuss, if he can, over some little foolishness.

NIP. No, I don't, an' I don't aim to say no more about it. I just mentioned what I did an' y' all kep' harpin' yer bugles, so that I just wanted y' t' know I c'd tell when I wuz cheated.

PAT. Nobody tried t' cheat you, Nip. When th' rain come up, we all started t' grabbin' doogies, an' I guess you just wuzn't as good a grabber as th' rest.

RED. Now, that's about th' sum an' substance of it, Pat. He'd be a sorry hand at pickin' up taters, wouldn't he?

TED. Well, I may not be such a good grabber myself. I feel I'm short some, too.

JOE. Well, I don't mind tellin' you that I'm a good grabber myse'f. I don't feel like I lost anything, an' I may not be so much ahead; but t' show I'm willing t' be fair an' square, I say le's put all th' doogies back in th' ring, if it ever stops rainin', an' start all over again.

JUD. Now y're talkin', That'll be fair fer one an' all.

NIP. That suits me. An' t' show that I don't want t' be a howlin' an' tryin' t' raise a fuss all time, I s'gest that we play some kinda game up here in this ole attic.

PAT. There'd be more room fer playin', back downstairs.

RED. Yeah, but I druther stay up here, where all these ol' relics is.

SAM. Me too. It's more romantic like, an' thrillin'. Why it r'minds me uv a movin' pitcher I saw one time 'bout a

gang uv robbers that wuz usin' th' attic uv an ole house like this fer a wren-dez-vouse.

JOE. I bet y' don't even know what a wren-dez-vouse is.

SAM. I bet I do. It's Siberianese fer meetin' place. I saw it in a book an' looked it up in th' dictionary as soon as I got a chance.

IKE. Well, I'm glad we ain't no robbers. We might all git 'rested an' put in th' plenipotentiary. Now see there! I know some big words, too.

NIP. Well, are we gonna play somethin', or just all set up here an' spout off big words?

PAT. Let's make up stories an' tell 'bout th' folks that has lived here in this house.

TED. Yeah, le's do. Just think of all th' things that has happened t' th' folks that owned these ole clo'es an' fixin's scattered around.

IKE. The' wuz one feller killed in this house, Pa said.

PAT. Good Goshness! Wuz he killed plumb dead?

NIP. What y' talkin' about, Pat? Of course he wuz plumb dead, if he got killed.

PAT. Not on yer tintype, Nip. The' wuz an old, old man—well, maybe he wuzn't quite that old either; but he wuz awful old—an' he said that when anybody met with a vi'lent death uv any kind, an' it just snatched 'em right off, that wuz th' end uv them. But if they fought an' struggled an' didn't die right off, then they allays come back an' ha'nted th' place.

JUD. I wish y' all'd hush.

SAM. Maybe *this* house is ha'nted, too.

RED. Ain't nobody lived here, now, in a mighty long time.

IKE. The's boun' t' be somethin' wrong with it.

JOE. I don't blame folks that's th' least bit timid fer not livin' here myself.

TED. Me neither. Now like Jud, fer instance.

JUD. Well, I don't keer what y' say 'bout it; but I ain't lost nothin' foolin' with ha'nts an' I ain't 'spectin' t' find nothin'. I lets 'em alone.

NIP. Aw, I don't b'lieve in—What wuz that?—ha'nts myse'f.

RED. No, I guess you don't.

NIP. I don't.

SAM. I don't either. Quit breathin' so hard, though, Nip. It gits my goat t' hear somebody breathin' like a wind-broken horse.

IKE. Well, I hain't sayin' the' hain't no ha'nts; but I hain't never seen none yit.

JUD. Oo-o-h! Look at that—lightnin', I reckon.

SAM. Gosh! Seems t' me like it's gittin' awful dark. It's rainin' as hard as ever, too.

PAT. I knowed uv an ole house that wuz ha'nted, one time; 'cause some fellers went an' proved that it wuz.

JOE. How'd they prove it?

JUD. How wuz it ha'nted?

RED. Did they ketch th' ha'nt?

PAT. No, they never caught nothin' but a cold an' an awful skeer.

NIP [*shivers*]. We're gonna ketch one or maybe both.

SAM. Go ahead an' tell 'bout them fellers, Pat.

PAT. Well, the' wuz an ole house that wuz claimed t' be ha'nted, so these fellers—the' wuz three uv 'em, went t' try an' ketch th' ha'nt. They watched it three nights an' never seen nothin'.

TED. Aw, y' see the' wuzn't nothin' to it, after all.

PAT. That ain't all uv it, though.

SAM. Well, tell th' rest uv it, then.

PAT. They felt purty brave th' fourth night; so they took a bed an' put it against th' door th' ha'nt wuz s'posed t' come in at, an' all went t' bed.

IKE. I bet they never slep' any, though.

NIP [*nervously*]. It's quit rainin'. Le's go home.

PAT [*very deep tones*]. At th' solemn hour uv midnight, th' door opened, just pushin' that bed out uv th' way like it wuzn't there.

PAT *makes a sweeping gesture with his hand.*

JUD. What wuz that moved over there in th' corner?

SAM. Wuz that all about th' fellers an' their bed?

PAT. Th' bed wuz busted into smithereens an' a big ball uv fire scorched an' blinded th' fellers till they couldn't see nothin' else.

JOE. I don't guess they *waited* t' see nothin' else.

SAM. I don't blame 'em, either.

IKE [*shuddering*]. Say, I b'lieve it's rainin' again.

RED [*shudders too*]. It's awful dark.

NED. We better go home.

JUD [*whimpering*]. We never could git by th' gravel pits, as dark as it is.

SAM. Maybe some uv our folks'll bring a light after us purty soon.

PAT *drops several marbles which roll and clatter across the floor. The others clutch at each other.*

IKE and NIP [*together*]. O-o-oh!

RED [*terrified*]. What wuz that?

JUD [*chattering*]. Th-th-the's a sk-eleton m-moved some'r's 'r-round here.

PAT [*calmly*]. Aw, don't git excited. I jest dropped a few doogies on th' floor.

TED [*relieved*]. Oh-h.

SAM [*forcing a laugh*]. Well, don't do that no more.

JOE. No, don't, 'cause I don't feel jist right up here m'se'f, an' if anything else like that happens, the's li'ble t' be a stampede.

PAT, *unnoticed by the others, raps on the back of the box on which he sits.*

SAM [*startled*]. Now, what wuz that?

JUD [*trying to appear calm*]. I guess th-hat w-wuz my knees a-kn-kockin'.

SAM. Red, le's me'n you go home. We don't hafta pass no gravel pits.

RED. All right. Joe, y' better go with us. You live our way an' we'll all be comp'ny t' each other.

JOE [*undecided*]. But I gotta long way t' go by m'se'f after I leave y'all.

JUD. Yeah, but it's down th' highway. You c'd make that

all right. I'd go home if I had anybody t' go past them gravel pits with me.

NIP. Le's go, anyhow, Jud. We might make it through without fallin' in.

JUD. We might not, too. An' if we ever did fall in one, we'd never come out alive.

PAT. You're right, Jud. They're all full uv water by now an' it'd be dangerous fer anybody t' try t' pass 'em, as dark as it is.

IKE. I'd ruther stay here till somebody comes after us, if Pat won't tell no more spook tales.

SAM. Nobody'll know where t' come fer us, is th' trouble with that idee.

JOE. That's right. I guess we better go. Red, maybe yer dad'd let you go on home with *me*, when we git t' your house. I'll ask 'im.

RED. Why, Joe, you c'd stay with me'n Sam. We got a whole bed upstairs t' ourselves.

SAM. Sure. Either that or let Nip and Jud go with you, bein' as they're afraid t' pass th' gravel pits.

NIP. I wouldn't be *afraid* t' go down th' highway, three uv us t'gether.

JUD. Me neither. But I don't keer who knows that I am skeered t' take a chance on passin' them gravel pits.

PAT. Looks t' me like th' whole bunch is skeered uv ever'-thing, t' tell th' truth about it.

TED. Maybe *you're* not skeered.

PAT. I'm not.

TED. Whatcha keep on waitin' here in this ole house fer, then, if y' ain't skeered?

PAT. I'm enjoyin' m'se'f, little brother. It's lotsa sport t' me t' watch th' antics.

TED. Oh, yes, you're so grown-up an' brave like. You think you are awful smart.

PAT [*laughs*]. Smart or no smart, I nearly skeered th' lickits out uv th' rest uv y'.

RED. I don't see anything smart about that.

PAT. I'll tell y'all somethin', if y' want t' know it.

SAM [*apprehensively*]. It ain't another ghost story, is it?
If it is, we don't want t' hear it.

PAT. No. Th' one I told awhile ago wuz all bunk. I just invented it t' skeer you boys.

TED. I knowed he wuzn't tellin' it right all th' time.

IKE. Why didn't y' call 'im down, then, Ted?

TED. Oh, it didn't skeer me, so I thought I'd just see how big he would stretch it.

JOE. Wuzn't it that bad, Ted?

TED. No, Pa did tell us 'bout a house that wuz *s'posed* t' be ha'nted.

NIP. Well, you don't need t' tell us no more about it. I reckon' we're all satisfied.

JUD. Go on an' tell it right, an' let's see how much Pat added to it.

PAT. Oh, I made up nearly all of it.

RED [*reassured*]. Well, tell us how it really wuz, then, Ted.

TED. Well, this house Pa told about wuz left empty a long time an' some people that run into it out uv th' rain one night—

IKE [*interrupting*]. Just like we run into this'n.

TED. Yeah. Well they actually heard some chains a-rattlin' up in th' loft.

JOE [*frightened*]. They did?

TED. Yes, but they took a light an' investigated it.

IKE. I wouldn't a-'vestigated nothin' about it. I'd a-pulled my stakes outa there.

TED. But they found it wuz only a little short piece uv chain in between th' logs that th' rats run over an' rattled once in a while.

SAM [*relieved*]. Wuz that all?

PAT. That's th' way Pa told it, fellars. They wuzn't no ha'nt to it.

RED. Well, we better go now, Sam. Ma'll be on 'er head 'bout us. She may be huntin' us now.

JOE. Yeah, le's go.

SAM, JOE, RED, JUD and NIP *rise*.

NIP. What *you* gonna do, Ike?

IKE [*rises*]. B'lieve I'll go with you fellers. When I git

t' Sam's an Red's house, I c'n call up home an' have Jake t' come after me on th' horse.

NIP. I hadn't thought uv th' telephone. Jud, we c'n do that too, can't we?

JUD. We c'n try it. I don't know whether Dad'll come after us or not, though.

SAM. Well, in union there is strength. We c'n all make it t' our house, I'm purty sure.

RED. Why, sure we can. Le's go, boys.

Exeunt SAM, RED, JOE, JUD, NIP and IKE.

TED. Le's go too, Pat.

PAT. What's yer hurry, kiddo?

TED. It's gittin late. We better git home.

PAT [*derisively*]. An' jump in bed an' pull th' cover t' hide our faces.

TED. No, not nec'sarily that. But le's go.

PAT. Well, go on. I'm gonna look aroun' some b'fore I leave. Might find somethin'.

TED. I don't know what y' think y'll find; but he'p yerse'f. I'm goin' home. [*Starts off.*]

PAT [*without looking at TED*]. Don't let th' spooks git y'.

TED [*turning*]. Same back t' you, son.

PAT [*still not looking at TED*]. Oh, don't worry. Nothin'll bother me. I'm too tough.

TED [*going out*]. Maybe.

At the exit TED picks up an old broom and a long cloth. He drapes the cloth over the broom, tying it just beneath the straw, then fastens a shorter stick below that, thus making a semblance of arms and head. PAT turns his attention to the boxes and barrels. TED reënters with his weird figure held before him, and still unnoticed creeps up behind PAT.

PAT. No tellin' what's in this place.

TED [*in sepulchral tones*]. No, the' ain't.

PAT straightens and turns. He sees the figure almost upon him, groans and falls in a faint.

PAT [*as he falls*]. Ah-h-h!

QUICK CURTAIN

TRAVEL TROUBLES

CHARACTERS

JESS, *the traveler*

LESS, *the resident*

SCENE: *A street.*

Discovered: LESS leaning against a lamp post.

LESS. The's just one thing I like about this town. I like the way it's laid out. Been dead quite a while now and she still lays purty much th' same.

Enter JESS carrying a coat across one arm and a suitcase in the other hand.

JESS [*approaches LESS and sets suitcase down*]. Say, young man, I want to go to the Bivens Hotel.

LESS. All right, if your Ma don't keer an' you won't stay long.

JESS [*embarrassed*]. I mean, how do you go there?

LESS. I don't never go. Their rates are too high.

JESS. Well, then, ~~how~~ do I go?

LESS. How y' 'spect me t' know 'bout your bizness when you don't know yourself? Looks t' me like you's goin' afoot, though.

JESS. Well, then, if you persist in being so meticulous about my manner of expression—

LESS [*interrupting*]. Say, I ain't tryin' t' tickle you, feller. If you've got a ticklish manner, I can't help it.

JESS. Meticulous means finicky. If you have to be so finicky—

LESS. Why, I'm not tryin' t' fin you, neither. What's wrong with you, feller?

JESS. I just started to remark—

LESS. *Re mark?* Where'd you mark th' first time?

JESS. I was going to *say*, then, that if you couldn't get my meaning clearly, I'd try using other words.

LESS. I wisht you would.

JESS. Well, can you direct me to the Bivens Hotel?

LESS. No, sir.

JESS. Why not?

LESS. 'Cause it ain't direct. It's round two corners from here.

JESS. Now you're getting down to what I want. Can you tell me how to reach it?

LESS. You can't reach it.

JESS. Why not?

LESS. Your arm ain't long enough.

JESS. There you go again. Can you tell me where it is?

LESS. We still talkin' 'bout th' Bivens Hotel?

JESS. Why, to be sure.

LESS. Well, I don't know whether I c'n tell you where it is or not.

JESS. I thought you were a resident of this town.

LESS. I am.

JESS. Don't you know where the Bivens Hotel is, then?

LESS. I know where it *was*, but last time I was there ever'-thing was goin' so high in it that the' may be a whole new business moved in under it by now.

JESS [*laughs*]. I'll have to take a chance on that; but I must stay somewhere, so tell me how to get there and let me be on my way.

LESS. I hate to see you git hi-jacked.

JESS. Oh, never mind that; go ahead and direct me to the hotel, young man.

LESS. No use o' me a-goin' at all. I'll tell you how an' let you go by yourself.

JESS. That's exactly what I've been wanting you to do for the last five minutes.

LESS. Well, you're a funny feller. Whyn't you say that in th' first place, 'stead o' callin' me names an' accusin' me o' doin' things to you that I never thought of?

JESS. I humbly beg your pardon, sir—

LESS. I ain't got no puddin'. What you want with puddin', anyhow? I thought you wanted to go to the Bivens Hotel. They'll give you a little bit to eat.

JESS. I won't interrupt you any more, if you will just tell me how to get to my destination.

LESS. You better be keerful how you start callin' me them names again, too, then.

JESS. I will. Tell me how to go to the Bivens Hotel.

LESS. Well, you go three blocks East. [*Points and awaits reply from JESS.*]

JESS. Yes.

LESS. Three blocks East and take the left hand. [*Gestures with his left hand.*]

JESS [*imitating LESS*]. Three blocks East and take the left hand. Then what?

LESS. Go one block North [*points North*] and take the right hand. [*Gestures in same manner as before.*]

JESS. One block North and take the right hand. Then what do I do?

LESS. Why, hold your nose. You'll be even with the glue factory.

JESS. Why don't you stick to your subject?

LESS. Well, you'll stick to any subject you touch, if you don't hurry on past that glue factory.

JESS. How far is it from the glue factory to the Bivens Hotel?

LESS. Oh, it's just a sticky second's walk.

JESS. Are they in sight of each other?

LESS. And in smell, too. They're right next door to each other.

JESS. Next door to each other? I fail to understand that.

LESS. Why, that means they're built side by side with no other building between them.

JESS. Oh, of course I know what you mean; but why on earth did they ever put a glue factory next door to a hotel?

LESS. Why, to make glue, of course.

JESS. But it seems to me that a hotel with such an atmosphere, so to speak, would lose all of its trade and be forced out of business.

LESS. Mebbe so; but they're stickin' right to it.

JESS. What is on the other side of the Bivens Hotel?

LESS. A bank.

JESS. Oh, a bank. Is it a State Bank or a National Bank?

LESS. Neither one.

JESS. Neither one? Why it must be a Trust Bank, then.

LESS. No, it ain't no Trust Bank neither.

JESS. Then what kind of a bank is it?

LESS. It's a clay bank.

JESS. Oh, I see.

LESS. No, you can't see it, either. Nobody sees it till they're right onto it, nearly.

JESS. Is it very steep?

LESS. Straight up and down's all.

JESS. And high?

LESS. 'Bout fifteen feet.

JESS. I should think that would be dangerous. I suppose there is a sign up to warn people, though.

LESS. Well, there *was* one; but it stayed up over a year and nobody fell off th' bank, so I didn't see no use of it an' took it down this mornin'.

JESS. Does this bank have any particular name?

LESS. Well, sometimes I call it "The Business Boom."

JESS. That's a rather peculiar name, isn't it?

LESS. Well, not considerin'.

JESS. Considering what?

LESS. Doc Bennet's office is at th' bottom of it.

JESS. But you just said that for the past year, no one has fallen down the bank.

LESS. That's why Doc hired me t' take th' sign down, I reckon.

JESS. I suppose, then, that this Doctor friend of yours is quite capable of pulling a patient right out of death's very door.

LESS. Yeah, sometimes, though, he pulls 'em through one way, and some times the other.

CURTAIN

COMIC RECITATIONS

TASTES

For a small girl.

Boys like a hound dog.

I like a cat.

Boys are 'all silly.

Some are too fat.

UNCLE FUDGE

When Uncle Fudge comes, he takes me on his knee
And jolts me up and down till I can hardly see.
He lets me pull his whiskers and never seems to care;
But I must never mention a thing about his hair—
For once an Indian, fierce and wild and big,
Scalped Uncle Fudge, so he must wear a wig.

A PERTINENT QUESTION

Do you remember, sweet, my sweet, a magic woodland way
That throbbed beneath our dancing feet one far-gone, golden
day?

Do you ever dream of the budding trees and the limpid,
shining sky,

Or the faintly perfumed summer breeze that sighed as we
said good-by?

Do you remember how the pathway ran? Pray *wire* me, if
you do,

For I want to show *another man* the path I showed to you.

SWEEPIN' OUT

Now, down at our house, when ma gets th' broom
An' starts with a vim t' sweep out th' room,
You jest as well hike, right then an' there,
'Less you want t' get strangled in th' dusty air!

If pa, he's a-readin' an' a-smokin' his pipe,
Ma jest comes along an' makes a big swipe
An' says kinda snappy, "Move yer big feet."
Pa looks at Ma an' moves his whole seat.

But he mutters an' grumbles an' says kinda low
Th' name uv a place he wants Ma t' go.
But he don't say it loud, 'cause Ma's got th' broom
An' he'd rather she'd use it t' sweep out th' room.

A RAINY DAY

Talkin' 'bout th' rain, I like it just fine;
You can have lots of fun, if the sun don't shine.
If it's just pourin' down till you can't go out,
That's no reason to whine or pout.

Just look around—find something to do.
Did you ever make kitty a paper shoe?
Try that some day when the skies are dark.
I think you'll agree, it's a nice little lark.

Or look at the pictures in a story-book,
Or go in the kitchen an' watch yer ma cook,
Or write where you've breathed on the window pane.
I'll tell you again, I like the rain.

ACCOUNTING FOR MY LACK OF TASTE

Across the street, there is a girl
Who loves to play and sing;
And oft at night when I would sleep,
She makes the welkin ring
By banging on the ivory keys
Or letting out a shriek.

No harm she means, this neighbor lass—
She bears no ill intent,
But practices an hour or so
To soothe an inborn bent
Which makes of her a slave to art.
(She seeks thus fame to seek.)

She plays quite well (or so they say)
And has a wondrous throat;
My friends and *hers* sit rapt in church
To hear her ev'ry note.
But then, you see, she sings and plays
For them, just once a week.

THE WHOOPING COUGH

My big sis has got—I really ought not tell—
But anyhow she's got it—has had it quite a spell.
She's got something that she can't laugh off—
Don't know where she got it—she's got the whoopin' cough.

An' she's a great big girl—you all know my sis—
Thinks she's nearly grown, so don't tell that I told this;
For sis is tryin' to keep this still. I found out
She don't want Jim Jones to know it. Think I'll shout,

“Hey there, Jim, you simp, you better watch your step!
Keep foolin' 'roun' sis, an' you'll lose all yer pep.”
But then I guess I won't; just let 'im go.
I'm not s'posed to tell him ever'thing I know.

Huh! There they went—sis an' Jim Jones, now.
I'd describe their actions but I don't know how.
Can't tell you, either, what I seen 'em do—
But purty soon Jim's gonna be whoopin' too.

TEACHER'S PET

Our teacher has a little pet
Whom *teacher* likes quite well;
For everything that teacher asks
The pet is sure to tell.

If some one puts a tack or pin
Upon the teacher's chair,
He ne'er escapes a whipping good,
If “pet” is standing there.

April Fool may roll around
With teacher's downfall planned;
But plans are sure to go astray
If "pet" is taking a hand.

In every school there is some one
(As onery as they get)
Who loses all his self respect
And makes a teacher's pet.

But one thing sure—as sure as fate,
There's not on record yet
A single famous person
Who admits being "teacher's pet."

And I hope that Saint Peter,
When he has any crowns to let,
Will consider everything
And not give any to "teacher's pet."

WHEN POP SHAVES

When Pop starts to shave,
He gets his water hot,
(And burns both his hands
To get it, apt as not.)

Then he broadcasts a call
With a loud-sounding yelp,
To the rest of the house
That he requires some help.

Ma must bring a towel,
Sis, the razor and hone;
He c'n find his strop—
We leave it alone.

I bring mug and brush.
He lathers up his face
And gets soap in his eyes,
Then charges 'round the place.

The towel 'round his neck,
He'll holler and cuss
Till the neighbors wonder
What's causing the fuss.

Finally Ma grabs him
And wipes his eyes clear;
But he says, "Clumsy,
Git outa th' way, here."

Then we all leave him
Alone at his job,
Hearing from the next room
Him grunt, swear and sob.

We scarcely dare to move
Or walk across the floor
For fear he'll cut his throat
And blame us evermore.

At last he reappears
Looking like sin—
For he's hacked up his jaw
And nicked up his chin.

Lather still in his ears,
All dried-up, sorter;
But he says he's done well
And saved a whole quarter.

A BUG BATTLE

A big, black beetle
And another not so large,
Engaged in a conflict
Over who should man the barge
On which both were floating
'Cross a sea uncommon ill.
(The barge was but a biscuit—
The sea, a pail of swill.)

The waters raged and foamed,
For the battle waxed so hot.
The Big Bug said, "I'm Captain."
The Wee Bug said, "You're not."
The Big Bug's proboscis
Inflicted quite a wound
On the thorax of the Wee Bug;
But Wee Bug held his ground.

Then Wee Bug fainted,
His antagonist dodged;
But several heavy blows
On his complex-lens were lodged.
Both of them clinching,
They tumbled off the raft,
Only to scramble back
While the watching cook laughed.

To the barge they clung in terror,
For the sea and shore both lifted!
In the hands of the cook,
Toward the pig-sty they drifted.
The motion being gentle
They remembered their feud;
So, with all their former fury,
Hostilities renewed.

They hammered and they clamored,
They fought with might and main;
Though neither one the victory
Could clearly seem to gain.
Finally at the pig-sty
Their whole world seemed to fall
And a big, hungry porker
Swallowed barge, bugs and all.

DID YOU?

Did you ever start home, all alone, after night,
Down a long, lonesome road, without any light,
With the moon just moping and the stars all asleep,
While the tree frog's croak made your very flesh creep?

When the hoot owls holloed and with wings the boughs
smote,
Did a big heavy lump rise up in your throat
That you tried hard to swallow but couldn't quite get,
For it took all your effort to keep your lips wet?

Did you lightly step, then, with scarcely a glance
At all the weird figures as they seemed to dance
Just beside the roadway and among the trees?
Did you somehow feel rather weak in the knees?

If a low-hanging branch, cold and wet with the dew,
Slapped you right in the face, did your mind race through
All the misdeeds and wrongs of your previous life,
As a sailor rushes home to his long-waiting wife?

When to whistle you tried and your tongue clove fast,
So that all you produced was a sharp, dry blast,
Did it cause you to shudder as it joined with the sound
Of your too loud footsteps striking hard on the ground?

Did you feel a great ease come to rest on your soul,
When at last you had reached your own threshold
And you felt the deep warmth of your own good bed,
With the cover pulled up to hide your whole head?

Now did you?

WHY IS IT?

When a boy meets a boy
He holds his head clear,
Throws out his chest,
In his eyes a leer;
Says "Yeah" for "Yes,"
And "Nope" for "No,"
Not in the least
Embarrassed or slow.

When this boy meets a man,
He holds his head high,
Squares his shoulders,
Keeps a steady eye;
Says "Yes, sir," "No, sir,"
As smooth as ice;
"Thank you" and "Please,"
Respectful and nice.

The same boy meets a girl—
He lets his head droop,
His eyes falter,
His shoulders stoop;
His fingers, all thumbs,
Try to fasten his shirt;
He says not a word
But digs his toe in the dirt.

Though he'd rather look well
In her eyes than any,
His very concern
Makes him a ninny.
She giggles—he grins
And looks at his boot.
She walks on thinking,
"Ain't Johnny cute?"

A CHANGE OF HABITS

“Ef I’s to git married,” said ole stingy Peter Kline,
“I ’spect I’d have to mend up on a few ways o’ mine.
Thar comes my chawin’ terbaccer—I guess it’d have to go;
Though I’m sure I’ll miss it awful bad—wuss’n anything,
I know.

Nigh onto forty long years, as th’ ’Samist David ’d say,
Hit has been to me a staff to comfort an’ sof’en th’ way.
Yep, I’ll miss my chawin’ men.

“But I’m a reas’nin’ feller, an’ I think I’m willin’ t’ ’low
Ef I ever do quit chawin,’ it’s time t’ c’mence right now.
Thar’s not but very few wimmin that still hangs onter the’r
snuff;

So fer me t’ drop my wust failin’ is only fair enuf.
An’ so I’m gonna brace right up—I’ll s’prise some folks
purty soon.

To Widder Green I’ll go right now. We’ll prob’ly marry
by June.

Yep, I’ll quit my chawin’ then.

“’N ’en ’ere’s my coon dogs—they’d mos’ likely cause some
rows,

Fer they ain’t no dogs don’t ’casion’ly come in the house.
Course, thar’s whar mine’s useter eatin’—I think a heap o’
my dogs,

’N’ I’ve built ’em a nice, warm, sleepin’ place, right under
the floor, with logs

’At I cut an’ hewed with keer t’ inshore my dogs’d all rest
well.

But it may not suit Missis Green—ye never kin def’nately
tell.

So I’ll roust my doggies’ pen.

“’Mongst my habits thar’s others that I’d plainly have ter
quit,

Sich as growin’ long toe-nails an’ sich like—not quite fit.
But that’s rale simple t’ doctor—I’ll eas’ly han’le that.

So I'll jes' go down t' Missis Green's—wait'll I git my hat.
Jest wait a while, will ye, till I visit Missis Green?
I'll tell ye when I git back what th' future'll mean.
Yep, I calkerlate ter win.

(Exit briefly, then enter again slowly.)

“Well, I reckon, peepul, 'tain't a bit o' useter try
T' quit my chawin'—I couldn't, ef I knowed I'd die.
An' as fer my coon doggies—somehow I'd never feel jest
right
Ef I throwed my doggies out 'thout any place t' sleep at
night.
It's jest too much t' 'spect, frien's, fer a man as old as I be
To change his ways fer a skirt—hit shore don't 'peal to me—
She jest went by with ole Jim Flynn.

RUSTIC COURTSHIP

I'll tell ye a story uv my pa and ma
And o' course it all happened down in Arkansaw.
I ain't sayin' it's so, fer I wuzn't there—
An' ef Pa knowed I tole it, he'd shore pull my hair.

You see, it wuz this way: My Pa and my Ma
Useter live close together, down in Arkansaw,
An' Pa got stuck on Ma's purty face.
So that's how it come they got up sich a case.

Now Pa he wuz awkward an' clumsy an' green,
An' th' bashfullest feller that ever wuz seen;
But Ma, she wuz witty an' had lots t' say,
An' it tickled her lots 'cause Pa acted that way.

'Course they seed each other ever' once in a while
An' Pa he'd grin an' Ma she'd smile.
An' Ma'd say, “Howdy?” an' start t' go by
A lookin' at Pa kinda outa one eye.

But o' course my Pa jest couldn't stand that,
So he'd try t' bow an' take off his hat.
Then Ma, she'd ast, "What did you say?"
An' Pa wuz so bashful he wouldn't look that way.

But Ma'd come back close as she c'd git
An' Pa he'd blush an' nearly have a fit.
'Nen she'd pucker her lips so sweet
An' Pa'd just stan' an' look at 'is feet.

Now Pa loved Ma an' soon knowed it,
An' she loved him, but she never had showed it.
So things went along in about th' same way
Till they run right together at th' spring one day.

Well, Pa wuz stooped over th' hole in th' ground
When up come Ma, not makin' a sound.
An' as he dipped up 'is water, quick as a flash,
Ma gave 'im a push—Oh, what a splash!

"Howdy?" sez Ma—Pa never said a word,
But sich puffin' and blowin' there never wuz heard,
As he clim'ed up th' bank with a unflinchin' eye
An' started for Ma, who wuz still standin' by.

She started t' run, but it weren't no use,
Fer he caught 'er new apern an' wouldn't turn loose.
So she clawed an' she pulled till out Pa come
An' his face wuz as red as a ripe, round plum.

Th' rest uv th' story is easy t' see,
Fer that's how come sich a person as me.
But there's one thing Gran'ma don't know till yet—
That's how Ma got 'er apern so wet.

MY BROTHER'S SWEETIE

My big brother, he's in love an' he carries on worse'n if he'd et a bait o' green apples. Y' jest orter hear 'im, sometimes, a-ravin' 'bout his Angel Child an' Fluffy Duffy an' ever'thing else sick'nin' he c'n think of, I reckon. It's enough t' make a dog sick t' hear him talkin' in 'is sleep, too.

He says he wants t' hurry up an' git grown, so's he c'n settle down an' marry. An' he's all time talkin' t' Pa 'bout 'is prospec's an' th' outlook fer th' future. Judgin' from th' way he ac's now, *I'd* guess he wuz goin' in th' sugar an' molasses bizness. That orter jest suit 'im, fer from th' way he talks, 'is Angel Child is so sweet she's sticky.

I can't see nuthin' great nor wonderful 'bout 'er, though, myself. She jest looks like a little snub-nosed, stringy-headed, spoilt girl, t' me. She has got 'er hair bobbed an' she keeps it frizzed up like a half-picked chicken that'd been dropped in th' fire. She uses loud p'fume an' th' powder and paint she puts on at one time would fix up a Sioux Indian warrior.

My brother thinks 'is girl c'n sing, but I don't. I jest as soon hear a mangy dog a-howlin'. But y' cain't say nuthin' t' him about 'er. Why, once I jest said I thought she wuz wall-eyed, an' he got so mad, he c'd 'a' beat me soft, but he couldn't ketch me. I don't keer, though, if he does git mad an' tell mamma an' anything else he wants to. I don't think she's a bit purty an' I'll tell 'im so again.

I told 'im once *I* wouldn't hold 'er hand. W'y, *I'd* jest as soon nuss a sick kitten. Pa says t' jest let 'em alone, that they both jest got a dose uv puppy love. But I say it's worse'n that, an' you'd say so, too, if you'd seen what I did. Why, once I slipped on 'em when they didn't know anybody's 'round, an' th' way they acted 'minded me o' young calves lickin' an' slobberin'.

SIZIN' UP THE CROWD

G'd ev'nin', folkses. How be all of ye, anyway? I'm fair t' middlin', I reckon, but I didn't git all th' supper I wanted, 'cause I wuz in sich a hurry t' git up here an' see who all had already come I wouldn't wait fer ma t' cook, but jest grabbed a bite an' run. I see some more here, too, that looks like they'd jest grabbed somethin' an' run.

But then I guess all in all, you're a purty nice-lookin' crowd, if some uv th' boys *ain't* got their hair combed. I see some uv th' wimmen, too—now you all here in front needn't t' look back, but I see some uv th' wimmin that I bet if they knowed jest how their hair looked, wouldn't be satisfied with it. Some uv th' girls ain't got th' powder on their faces straight, either. Gosh, it had shore better not rain before they git home. If it does, they'll need a rollin' pin t' smooth down th' dough on their necks.

I see they's several married people here to-night—an' a lot more that'd like t' be. Well, I'll say. No, I reckon it's jest a bald-headed man. I thought at first it wuz th' moon a-risin'.

An' looka there, would ye? There's a man with a mustache. He looks like he'd swallowed a mule an' tha's his tail a-stickin' out. If I had a mustache like that, you know what I'd do? I'd cut it off and use it fer a blackin' brush. You c'n jest bet, if I's a womern, I never would marry a man with a mustache. No, sir. Ugh, I jest couldn't stand t' have my lips tickled. I'd mighty nigh ruther be an ole maid than t' marry a man with a mustache.

But I'll tell y' right now, I shore wouldn't want t' be no ole maid, nor ole bachelor either. If I had charge uv things, I tell y' what I'd do. I'd gather up all th' ole maids, an' ole bachelors, an' toad frogs, an' stingin' lizards, an' so on, an' I'd hire a whole lot uv one-eyed niggers that jest could tell where they's a-goin' an' nuthin' about what they's a-doin', an I'd have them t' carry all uv 'em off an' dump 'em in some big desert. I bet they'd be some fun

when the toad frogs begin t' grumble an' the ole maids got their stingers out an' stung th' ole bachelors an' th' ole bachelors started dodgin' th' ole maids—aw, I mean when th' ole lizards begin t' hop, not th' ole maids—aw, I'm all mixed up an' I'm gonna sit down.

PA'S

Pa's air funny fellers; that is, sometimes they air funny an' other times they are not so funny. I think it's awful funny how ever' one uv 'em got by when they's little boys an' was reg'lar angels. To hear some uv 'em talk, they musta been better'n th' average angel.

The mystery to me, though, is how ever they, the very same pa's, bring up such bad little boys of their own. But, according to what Ma says, though, they ain't none uv 'em no benefit, except to keep all the little boys from bein' orphans. She says Pa is jest about as useful as a wart on a snake's hip bone.

He may not be very useful, but he shore is handy. He has got the biggest hand I ever saw, I believe. He nearly lifts me off the floor, sometimes. His foot is no midget, either. He never has any trouble finding his shoes. They're easy enough to be seen.

Pa says he's the head uv th' family, an' he says that I'm just a chip off the old block. I guess, according to that, he must be the blockhead. An' talkin' about heads, I know a boy's Pa who ain't got no more hair on his head than a chigger. An' that shore ain't much, is it? This feller wuz at one time a great beef-eater an' he had to put a hot iron on his head to melt the taller out uv th' roof of his mouth, so that singed all the hair off, too.

When I get grown, I'm gonna hire me a nigger an' name him Pa. Then ever' time he turns aroun' or looks cross-eyed, I'll holler "don't" at 'im, or land on 'im with a shingle or razor strop. I bet I shore can think uv a thousan' an' one Tomfool things to send 'im after or tell 'im to do,

too. I'd have to go some, though, to git ahead uv some pa's I know, when it comes to makin' life miserable fer their boys.

But ever' thing about a pa is not so bad as you might think. Ef they hadn't a-been no pa's, some little girl would 'a' had to missed gittin' a mighty fine husband (meanin' me) an' if they wuzn't no pa's, the ma's 'd all run out of somebody t' talk about an' blame things on. One thing, before I close, that I want to say: If ever I git to be a pa, I won't make my little boy wear my ole, wore-out britches, an' I'll jest ketch 'im all th' June bugs he wants.

A COMPLAINT

I've got a complaint to make to you folks and I want you to listen till I get through, too. I'm no lawyer, nor anything of the kind, and I may not be very smart, but I have got sense enough to know when I'm not treated right. And another thing—I don't have to be knocked down before I know that I'm about to get hit.

But what I want to complain about is being the middle child of the family. It may not do any good to complain and I don't know exactly who is to blame about it, but I just catch it on all sides. I'm the middle child of the family, so I'm just big enough to run errands by myself and just small enough to crawl under places and get things. I'm just old enough to have to go to school and still young enough to have to say my prayers.

I'm the only one in our family that does say any prayers, too. My big sis is too near grown and has to put in too much time thinking of her beau. Baby brother is too little to learn them. Mamma's always too tired, when she gets ready to go to bed. Pa has rheumatism and can't bend over, so there it is! I have to say prayers for the whole outfit. I reckon, if I should die, they'd be in a mess. I guess I'd have to speak to old Saint Peter, when they came on up, so they could all get in out of the weather.

And when company comes, being the middle child, I always must wait at dinner time. Sis is so nigh to being grown that she must sit at the table and help to entertain the company. Of course Sammy gets to eat—he's the baby. But I—I just get what's left, that's all. Why, 'twas only by an accident, the other day, that I found out a chicken had anything but a neck. I'm abused a sight.

When there's any place to go that the whole family can't go, I don't have to tell you who gets left at home. I'm too little to hang onto the fender, but too big to sit in some one's lap. I can't even play with the boy that lives by our house. He's got a billy goat I'd like to help break, but no—Ma says I'm too little to do anything like that, but Pa says that I'm too big to cry because I can't.

I don't know what I'll do. There's one thing, though, that I know. That is, that if ever I have three children and the middle one is a boy, I'll let him go any place he wants to and he won't have to do a lick of work. I'll let him sit up as late as he likes and every few days I'll buy him about a barrel of candy, nuts, and so on. I think Congress or Henry Ford or somebody ought to make a law to protect all of the middle boys. Don't you?

STEVE ON THE TELEPHONE

Halo! halo! Halo, Ay say! Ah, halo! How you bane? Vat number do Ay vant? Vell, vat numbers have you got? Ah, Ay see. You vant me to gif you de number. Vell, how can Ay gif it to you ven Ay ain't got it myselluf? Ah, Ay see, you vant to know who is it Ay bane vant. Vell, Ay vant de doctore. De *doctore*. De man vat gif de pill an' say, "Sthick out your tongue." Yah, yah. Oh, Ay dunno. Yust any of 'em, Ay guess. Yust so he's a doctore.

Ah, halo, doctore! Halo—you not de doctore? Vell, vy in de heck you bane sthick up yerself in de doctore's place? Ah, Ay see, you not de doctore, yust de doctore's vife. Vell, den, Meesus doctore's vife, ven your pill driver hoosban he coom home, Ay vant you bane tell 'im right quick

to coom soon in a hurry to my house, vere Ay haf bane lif ten years already yet in de same place, an' bring hees tools, but leaf hees appytite for Ay ain't got no more cider like Ay had las' time he coom. Vat? You don' tink you kin tell heem vat Ay say? Vell, vy cain't ye? Ain't you bane speakin' mit 'im now? You cain't said it all? Ah, heck, [*slowly, with emphasis*] you tell your hoosban, ven he coom back, to coom hees selluf to Steve Svindstrom's an Ay pay heem before he leafs wit hard cash, by goom.

Vell, Ay guess hees 'sposed to fin' out vat's de matter is, ven he cooms. Dat's vat Ay bane payin' heem for.

Vell, den, if you yust got to know, my brudder, he bane kickt mit a mool. Mool, *mool*, vat say "ah-ee-ah-ee," an' ain't got no sense, like a doctore's vife. Bane kickt mit 'im. Yah. Naw, dat mool he ain't seeck, Ay tell ye it's bane my brudder. He bane kickt mit 'im. Yah. In der head, by-goom. He don' vas dun nuthin', but try to put de crupper under dat mool's tail, ven Ay bane tell 'im not to already before.

Vell, dat mool yust lif hees foot up an put it against my brudder an' shove, an' my brudder, vere vas he? Vy novere's, only ofer in der fodder stack on his eyebrows. Yaw, he hollered. Is he up—vat you say? Ay dunno vether hee's talkin' mit sense or mitout 'em, but Ay tink dat it must be mitout, fer dat mool 'bout kickt 'em out hees sense.

Ah, you say, here cooms your hoosban. Vell, here cooms my vife, too, already yet. Vell, den, hitch 'im onto me, der doctore.

Halo, doctore! Ya, dis is me, Steve Swindstrom. Ya, my brudder, he haf been kickt mit a—Vat it is yo say, Kata-rina? Ah, all right, den nefer mind, doctore, ve von't need you now, hees dun quit hurtin' already yet. Naw, he don' hurt heem none at all, now. Naw, he bane kickt mit a mool in der eyebrow, but Ay guess ve safe der doctore's bill, an' pay it on der funeral. Goo'-bye.

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